

An Armenian Artist in Ottoman Egypt

Yuhanna al-Armani and His Coptic Icons

Magdi Guirguis

Introduction by Nelly Hanna

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Photographs by Nabil Mankabadi

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To my beloved
Intessar Malak

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Foreword

The Friends of Armenian Culture was founded in Cairo in the early 1940s by a group of like-minded Egyptian-Armenians. Their aim of presenting aspects of Armenian art, history, and culture to non-Armenians started a trend of activities highlighted by the publication in 1959 of Onnig Avedissian's *Peintres et sculpteurs armeniens.* As the earliest known Armenian artist in Egypt, Yuhanna al-Armani is prominently mentioned in this book.

Since 1985, when the manuscript of Nubar Der Mikaelian's brief study on Yuhanna came into our possession, a publication on the artist became part of our plans. In this we were fortunate to have the permission of Nabil Mankabadi to use his photographs of the icons of Yuhanna and Ibrahim al-Nasikh. Undoubtedly, during this long period the support and guidance of the president of our group, Vartkes Kredian, has been invaluable.

We are infinitely grateful to Nelly Hanna, first for suggesting Magdi Guirguis as the writer for this book and then for being so helpful all along in bringing it to fruition.

J. Mardick Guiragossian
The Friends of Armenian Culture

Preface

Magdi Guirguis

In 1998, I first became interested in Ibrahim al-Nasikh, a multi-talented Coptic painter in eighteenth century Egypt who had painted a large number of icons, and copied an even larger number of manuscripts. I subsequently wrote an article about Ibrahim to place him within the wider historical context of the period and to understand the factors that gave rise to his work and to that of other artists who worked with him.

Yuhanna al-Armani was one such artist and I was inspired by my research to broaden my exploration of the whole phenomenon of icon paintings that had flourished in the eighteenth century.

Fruitful dialog with Nelly Hanna about these two painters led me to another chance meeting, in the summer of 2003, this time with Jack Guiragossian, who initiated the idea of a detailed study of Yuhanna al-Armani. He informed me that the Friends of Armenian Culture in Cairo had had the idea for such a study some twenty years ago. I am very grateful for the society for providing me with the slides of Yuhanna's icons and for its financial support for my archival work. Nelly Hanna followed up on all the various stages of this work and made many valuable comments to the manuscript. Jack Guiragossian was instrumental in encouraging me to complete this work; his extensive knowledge

of Armenian history and traditions has been invaluable. I am also indebted to Armin Kredian, who filled in my knowledge of the Armenian clergy's hierarchy.

The idea of studying Yuhanna al-Armani in the context of time, place, and society as opposed to the narrower focus of a particular religious community was greatly shaped by discussions that took place in the Ottoman Seminar of the Egyptian Society for Historical Studies. I would like to extend my thanks to Raouf Abbas, Nelly Hanna, and Asim al-Dessouqi for their ongoing support in this regard, and to Nasser Ibrahim for organizing the seminar.

I wrote this book during the academic year 2006/2007 in Berlin while I was Gorg Graf Fellow of the Catholic Exchange Service (KAD) and subsequently a fellow of the research program "Europe in the Middle East—The Middle East in Europe" (EUME), which is organized by the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, the Fritz Thyssen Foundation, and the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin. I am grateful to these institutions and particularly to the KAD and the Fritz Thyssen Foundation for providing me with a scholarship that enabled me to work on my own project. The discussions during the seminars and workshops of EUME and the exchanges with my co-fellows from Iran, Turkey, Morocco, and other countries, as well as with colleagues from the Berlin Universities and the Center for Modern Oriental Studies (ZMO) helped me to clarify and develop my ideas. In particular I would like to thank: Gudrun Krämer, Ulrike Freitag, Carsten Walbiner, Georges Khalil, Samah Selim, Christine Hofmann, Dana Sajdi, Raja Rhouni, Nora Lafi, Dyala Hamza, Shadin Tageldin, Ozlem Biner, Erol Koroglu, Eli Bar-Chen, Oded Schechter, Muhamed Vasfi, and Zafer Yenal.

My deep thanks and appreciation are due to Father Mansour Mistrih and Father Wadi Abu-Ellief of the Franciscan Center for Oriental Studies in Cairo. Many thanks are also due to Amina Elbendary, who translated this work, to the American University in Cairo Press, especially Nadia Naqib, and to Jennifer Speake, who patiently edited the manuscript. I would like to thank the staff at the National Archives in Cairo, especially Mrs. Nadia Mustafa and Mrs. Najwa Mahmoud, for their assistance during research undertaken there.

Introduction

Nelly Hanna

This work on an Armenian icon-painter living and working in Cairo has multiple significance. Yuhanna al-Armani is a well-known figure among historians of Coptic art and much has been written about him. There is a large body of literature about the artistic production of this eighteenth-century icon-painter in the context of art history; this work opens perspectives from a rather different angle, for a consideration of his life and works. Here, for the first time, Yuhanna is studied as an integral part of the history of the eighteenth century: his artistic production is considered as a social phenomenon rather than as a uniquely art-historical one. Rather than study the icons solely in the context of an icon-painting tradition to see where his works fits in, this book presents the icons as part of the eighteenth-century social scene in Cairo, providing answers as to what the conditions were that led to a proliferation of icon-painting in the lifetime of Yuhanna al-Armani, who it was who ordered and financed the icons, and how the painter coped with the increased demand.

This method for the study of the artistic production of Yuhanna al-Armani was made possible because Magdi Guirguis found a large number of eighteenth-century deeds recorded in the registers of the Ottoman courts of Cairo about the man, his family, his partners, and

other members of the Armenian community in Cairo. He has thus based his study on contracts of partnership, on contracts of sale, and on marriage deeds, all of which are essential in reconstructing the life of the artist. The icon-painter can, on the basis of these deeds, be seen in relation to the Coptic community and the Armenian community. It is this that distinguishes the book from earlier studies, since this documentation, used here for the first time, was not known to earlier scholars writing on Yuhanna. As a result, many dimensions of his life and his work can now be discussed on a documentary basis.

This study has also used as its source material the icons that Yuhanna al-Armani painted in the churches of Egypt, together with the deeds preserved in eighteenth-century court records. The use it makes of the icons is to glean from them material that can be useful for the reconstruction of the artist's life. The result is a social history of art, or, in other words, an attempt to understand artistic production on the basis of historical and social contexts. This means that the icons are both the result of centuries of artistic tradition and of artistic influences coming from various directions and of the social, economic, and political conditions that prevailed in Yuhanna's lifetime. The book may consequently be read in the context of art history, but, more importantly, it can be read as a social history that elucidates some aspects of eighteenth-century life, much in the same way as the great monumental buildings of the Ottoman sultans in Istanbul and the Mamluk sultans in Egypt are studied as social and political expressions rather than simply as architectural history. The difference between these major architectural structures and the work of Yuhanna al-Armani is one of scope: the churches where Yuhanna painted icons were modest structures, and the persons who financed them were not sultans or members of the military ruling class. On reading the book one can, on the contrary, get a glimpse of the life of ordinary people living in Cairo at the time, those about whom we know so little. We can try to reconstruct the way that the icon-painter organized his work, who the persons were who assisted him, what role his family played in his work, and so on.

The icons were by definition an aspect of religious art; they respected certain norms in form and in content. The scenes depicted and the choice of saints followed the traditions of Coptic art. Yet, as

the book shows, they reflect other aspects of civilian life that prevailed in eighteenth-century society. Icon-painters, for instance, seem to have belonged to guilds in the same way as other craftsmen did, even though they were not as numerous as other craftsmen. They sometimes worked individually but also sometimes in partnership with other craftsmen, dividing among themselves the different decorative schemes that a church required. What we learn about the way Yuhanna undertook his work thus sheds light on the working conditions of certain crafts.

The book develops a number of themes along these lines. First is the issue of identity: who exactly was Yuhanna al-Armani? The obvious answer was that he was an Armenian, living in Cairo, under Ottoman rule, and working in the context of the Coptic Church. There are thus several identities to deal with, and each one had its significance. There are also various dimensions involved: the religious dimension, since icons were an aspect of religious art; the social dimension of the complex network of relationships that Yuhanna maintained with both the Coptic and the Armenian community; and the economic dimension, since the works were commissioned by a wealthy class of civilian Coptic notables.

The existence of numerous communities in urban centers was commonplace in all the large towns and cities of the Ottoman Empire. In Istanbul, for instance, there were, among others, Greeks, Armenians, Jews, Venetians, and Arabs; Cairo had important Maghribi, Turkish, and Syrian communities, not to mention smaller European and Armenian ones. What we learn about the relations between the members of different communities in Cairo may shed light on our understanding of how such communities functioned in other areas.

The analysis of Yuhanna's network of relationships in fact shows that members of the two Christian communities in Cairo, Coptic and Armenian, were intertwined, and relations between these two communities were porous and multifaceted. Not only did Yuhanna work with Copts, but both he and several other family members were married to Copts. It is also very likely that he lived in or near a Coptic district, so that proximity made social relations easy.

Secondly, there is the question of why there was this artistic revival at that particular moment in time. Not only were the icons that Yuhanna

painted beautiful works, but they were also very numerous. Therefore, one needs to ask "why then?" Why was there so much demand for his work at that particular period? As a matter of fact, for a long time, the eighteenth century was considered to have been a period of decline in Cairo that was arrested by the Napoleonic invasion. More recent work has questioned this approach. The analysis of Yuhanna's work and the contribution he makes to the icon-painting tradition of the Coptic Church adds another dimension to this debate.

The third issue is trying to explain how the Armenian community in Cairo produced such an interesting figure at a time when this community was rather modest in number, resources, and social status, and did not figure significantly on the political scene. In fact, Armenian communities of the region in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries existed under very diverse conditions and followed numerous trajectories. In Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire, they were not only numerous but they also enjoyed high status, many of them being closely allied to power groups; likewise, in Aleppo, the third largest city after Istanbul and Cairo, a vibrant community was involved in international commerce. Just as prosperous were some of the Armenian communities outside of the Ottoman Empire. In Iran, they were involved in the silk trade, a major export business that extended to Europe and other places. The Armenian traders not only diffused the merchandise but were part of important international networks with other Armenian communities, and thus an important tie between countries where there were otherwise tensions and conflicts.

When we look at the Armenian community of Cairo in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, another picture emerges. Although Cairo was the second-largest city in the Ottoman Empire, the Armenian community there, compared to that in other cities in the region, was estimated to have numbered only about two thousand people. And compared to their past glorious history in Egypt, as well as to their achievement in nineteenth-century Egypt, the Armenian community in eighteenth-century Cairo was at a modest stage in its existence. The problem, therefore, is to explain how there emerged from this milieu an icon-painter who may be credited with a rebirth of Coptic art. How, in this most modest of Armenian communities, did such a significant

body of work come about? This is one of the questions this book tries to address.

It does so by exploring different social aspects in eighteenth-century Cairo, offering the reader a page in Coptic history. This, however, is not the typical Coptic history of patriarchs and martyrs, but a history in which the urban dwellers of Cairo are very much present. For the Coptic community, the eighteenth century, as Magdi Guirguis portrays it, represents a time during which a civilian elite reached a high level of prominence and wealth. These civilian notables were instrumental, through their patronage of the arts and of church construction, in creating the conditions that allowed Yuhanna al-Armani to exercise his genius and to be so prolific. They paid for the restoration and the reconstruction of a large number of churches. Consequently they required icons to decorate these buildings.

One could add to this explanation the fact that as craftsmen in certain fields the Armenians were known to be highly skillful. In Cairo, as elsewhere, they worked in fine crafts such as jewelry. In Anatolia they were known for their skill in the making of ceramics and high-quality textiles. Yuhanna al-Armani can be placed in a long tradition of highly qualified artisans.

There are also connections to be made with the history of the region. By following the life and the work of Yuhanna al-Armani, this book presents us with a number of complex issues that concern historians of Egypt in the eighteenth century and historians of the Ottoman world in general.

The sheer volume of icon production of the eighteenth century leads us to ask whether these works were produced commercially rather than on commission since there are more than three hundred works done by our artist, either on his own or in partnership with others. The distinction is important. A product that was produced commercially implies that there was a market, and that the producer was confident that he would sell his product when he had finished it. For an artistic product (that means a non-essential one) to be marketed in this way means that we are talking of a certain sector of society with a high level of spending. Evidently, more study is needed for us to understand the implications of such a situation and to determine how generalized this trend was.

Moreover, this subject could be pursued in relation to other parallel trends in eighteenth-century society.

Another issue hinges upon the relationship between religious and non-religious life. The book suggests that, unlike earlier periods, in the eighteenth century, icon-painting passed from the hands of monks and priests to those of laymen. It is possible, even likely, that Yuhanna, himself a layman, produced decorative works for people's houses and was not fully occupied by the painting of icons. It is also possible that he was familiar with artistic traditions other than those of the Coptic Church. He should, consequently, not be identified purely as an artist of religious works. A close look at some of the icons provides some support for this idea. The main subjects of most of the icons are saints, painted in rich traditional garments, often decorated in gold, and in static positions, forming the central visual focus of the icon. However, some icons also contain, in a corner or less prominent space, and on a much smaller scale, ordinary people who could be the contemporaries of Yuhanna, depicted in a much freer style, with much more movement. Thus, at several levels we can observe the religious and the non-religious. Again, this can be taken to reflect a larger trend in society, which we need to subject to analysis in relation to other subjects.

Thus, the story of Yuhanna al-Armani can be seen as functioning on many levels. They touch in different ways and on different dimensions of the eighteenth century, Armenian history, Coptic history, and Ottoman history. As such, his life and works help us to gain a better understanding of the period and to open the door to new research on a number of issues.

1

The Background

Anyone interested in Coptic art of the Ottoman period (AD 1517–1805), whether scholars or others, is familiar with the name of Yuhanna al-Armani, an artist famous for paintings that today still adorn a number of churches in Old Cairo. Yet, curiously enough, this man, who is often credited with being behind a revival in Coptic religious art in the eighteenth century, was not a Copt himself. Yuhanna al-Armani (d. 27 July 1786) belonged to Cairo's Armenian community, a community with ancient roots in Cairo, that was sufficiently well integrated into Egyptian society that one of its members could become a leading painter of Coptic icons. Yuhanna lived at a rich juncture of history and geography that allowed him and other artists of his generation opportunities to produce their art and for him to rise in society. This book is an attempt to place Yuhanna the man, and the icons he painted, within the historical, cultural, and social contexts of eighteenth-century Cairo.

It will attempt to sketch—as far as extant sources allow—a biography of Yuhanna al-Armani, placing him within a number of circles to which he belonged: that of the Ottoman Empire, of which he was a subject; that of the Armenian community, to which he belonged ethnically, linguistically, and socially; that of the city of Cairo in which he lived and worked, married, and had children; and that of the Coptic community within

which he built his artistic career. In some ways, the story of Yuhanna al-Armani was typical of many others living in this multicultural empire, especially in the large cities, of which Cairo was one. In other ways, his life trajectory was that of an individual whose story could be seen as a series of events, some of which were predictable and others unpredictable, some of which followed trends set by others, while others seem to have been accidents of history.

An Armenian by birth, language, and ethnicity, Yuhanna belonged to a community that had settled in Egypt many centuries earlier and had been actively involved in its economic, social, and cultural life. The Armenians had a presence in Cairo which dates from at least as far back as the Fatimid period (969–1171), that is some six to seven hundred years before Yuhanna arrived on the scene. And during these many centuries, Armenians maintained a distinct cultural and religious identity of their own. Yuhanna's own life and career are a clear indication of the degree to which this community was integrated in the wider Ottoman Egyptian society in eighteenth-century Cairo. Yuhanna's own family, nevertheless, had only recently settled in Egypt, probably the generation before his, sometime in the late seventeenth century.

Yuhanna shot to fame as the leading icon-painter in Egypt. Even though a number of other painters—Egyptians, Armenians, and Syrians—flourished at the same time, he was the most famous of them all. Modern church-goers, as well as numerous tourists, continue to admire his icons at churches such as the Mu'allaqa church (Hanging Church of the Virgin) in Old Cairo, one of the most frequently visited Coptic sites. The icons he painted remain an important part of the visual culture of modern Copts.

The icons Yuhanna painted appear almost abruptly on the Coptic art scene. They dominate studies of Ottoman Coptic art, many of which focus much of their attention on his work. In fact, his rise to fame and the ubiquity of his surviving icons have long posed a dilemma for historians of Coptic art, and, more generally, Coptic culture. One of the big questions is why at this particular time was there such a flourishing of this art form. In general there are only few studies that explore Coptic art in the Ottoman period, and the explanations that these studies propose in answer to this question tend to follow one mainstream line of

thought, which will be discussed below. The present study will propose other explanations, based on the study of archives of the period.

Many scholars have attributed this revival of Coptic religious art to Yuhanna al-Armani al-Qudsi himself. He is seen as having, almost single-handedly, brought icon-painting to new heights that it had not reached for a long time and to have spread this art by his own very voluminous production. Yet, as we shall see, the present work will question this idea of a single-handed revival and will propose an alternative explanation for the rise of Yuhanna al-Armani.

Yuhanna has been assumed to have been an Armenian émigré from Jerusalem who arrived in Egypt already a fully developed artist and who brought with him Syrian artistic traditions. These Syrian traditions are thought to have developed under the influence of contacts with Europe and the interaction of Syrian Christians with Christians in Europe. This argument is based on the fact that he attached 'al-Qudsi' ('of Jerusalem') to his name.

Not only was Yuhanna credited with bringing Syrian traditions to Egypt, being an émigré from Jerusalem, but some scholars interpreted the revival he initiated as being the result of his introduction of Armenian art to Egypt, thus giving Coptic art, at that time in decline, a new life. There were Armenian communities spread out across numerous regions: in the Ottoman Empire, in the Safavid Empire, and in different parts of Europe. Consequently, their art was influenced by numerous elements that were borrowed from the various cultures with which Armenians were in close contact and which they integrated into their own artistic production. Thus, according to this interpretation, behind the revival of icons in eighteenth-century Egypt was an Armenian element connected to certain European art forms that had been introduced to Egypt through Yuhanna.

One could place such explanations in the context of broader approaches that have dominated historical research for some time, notably the explanation of change by the 'Coming of the West' paradigm. This approach considers Egypt, as other parts of the Ottoman world, to have been in a state of decline until awakened to European influences. In Egypt, this awakening came with the French expedition of Napoleon in 1798. European influence arriving via an Armenian

channel, notably Yuhanna, would correspond to an earlier example of European influence.

More recently, there has been serious revision of this approach, among historians of the Ottoman Empire in general and of Egypt in particular. Scholars are developing alternative ways to study regions and societies outside of the Western world without using a Eurocentric approach; they are approaching the study of these societies on their own terms and through their own internal dynamics. As a result, many historical studies written today attempt to discard the Eurocentric approach. However, it appears that these approaches used by historians have not filtered through to the art historians. Consequently, the few works that did deal with Coptic icons in the Ottoman period did not give Yuhanna or other members of the Armenian community in Egypt enough weight as active participants in society or as agents in the emergence of the artistic revival. These studies neglect to take into account the wider Egyptian context as a possible explanation for the phenomenon from the seventeenth century onward. They also do not give credit to Yuhanna and his generation of artists living and working in Egypt for their originality and ability to integrate and adapt several cultural and artistic traditions in the works they produced.

In the view of the present writer, the artistic production of the eighteenth century, including that of Yuhanna al-Armani, would not have been possible without the specific historical context of the time. It is this context that the present study will attempt to set before the reader. It will consider the artistic output of this painter as the product of a particular time and place and try to understand the circumstances that allowed icon production to take place and for an artistic revival to have flourished. Thus, even though this study will focus primarily on the life and work of Yuhanna al-Armani, this cannot—should not—be done in isolation from the wider contexts in which he lived.

In order to place this phenomenon in a context that can make it meaningful, I have identified some of the levels that we can look at more closely. The first main relevant context that can help us to understand this remarkable artist is the Ottoman context. The very structure of the Ottoman Empire allowed for an ethnic, religious, and cultural multiplicity. It allowed individuals and various communities to move easily,

for instance from Jerusalem to Cairo, and to interact with one another while simultaneously allowing them to preserve their specific identities and traditions.

The second important context is that of Eastern Christianity. Non-Chalcedonian Orthodox churches, namely the Coptic, Assyrian, Armenian, and Ethiopian churches, enjoyed varying degrees of cooperation and integration with each other. These churches' rejection of the creed formulated at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, which declared monophysitism heretical, distinguished them from the adherents of the churches of Byzantium and Rome, which believe in the dual nature of Jesus Christ, one divine and one human. These matters related to faith and dogma, even though they are of an abstract nature, could have a bearing on the subject matter of an artistic output that was largely of a religious nature. The sectarian context also had important social and cultural ramifications. Since the adherents of both the Coptic and Armenian churches were monophysites, members of both sects were allowed to pray in each other's churches and inter-marriage between the members of the two churches was acceptable.

This sectarian affinity helps us understand the popularity and spread of Yuhanna al-Armani's works in Egypt: the fact that he was a monophysite encouraged Copts to commission him to do their work, even though he was Armenian, and to depict their most sacred religious topics, which reified their beliefs and venerated their saints. Furthermore, Christian churches differ in the artistic conventions by which they represent Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the saints. Consequently, an artist from a totally foreign church would not be able to paint icons for a Coptic church in the way the members of the Coptic community would be familiar with and would want to see.

The affinity of the Coptic and the Armenian communities may have had a more personal effect on Yuhanna. His life is in fact a good example of these various influences at work. The social network that his family had spun in Egypt, including Yuhanna's two marriages to Coptic women, reveals how well integrated Armenians were within the Coptic community.

The third context that can help us understand Yuhanna's work is that of Ottoman Egypt. The social, political, and economic transformations

that the Ottoman Empire underwent in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were reflected throughout its various provinces, including Egypt. To understand the rise of an artist like Yuhanna al-Armani and the artistic and cultural revival of his time, one needs to take into consideration these complex transformations and to try to link them to the artistic production of the time.

This revival implied a number of changes. First, the number of Coptic icons being produced in Egypt during the eighteenth century was much higher than that produced in the preceding centuries, as will be illustrated in some detail later. Moreover, a change was apparent in the identity of the artists themselves. Not only was icon-painting taken up by professional artists who worked for a fee or on commission, in other words on a commercial basis, but also these icon-painters were persons who were from outside Church circles; whereas icon-painting had earlier been one of the functions that were undertaken as acts of piety by monks and priests, it now became a craft by which people made a living. The commercialization of this art form may possibly have, in part, been behind the increase in demand and in production of the time.

As modern historians, we are familiar with the names of only a handful, or fewer, of these specialized artists. The majority remain anonymous. Yet this phenomenon was part of a larger development, which we may tentatively refer to as a secular trend appearing in Egyptian society in general and the Coptic community in particular. Increasingly, the Coptic civilian elite, the archons, became influential as leaders of the Coptic community, playing an important role as patrons of artistic production. They patronized religious institutions and various church activities and financed the production of religious art. These persons were laymen, rather than priests or monks, and consequently were not part of the religious hierarchy. The revival of artistic production, which was part of a larger renaissance that affected various aspects of Coptic life, had several manifestations. One of them was the proliferation in the number of manuscripts from the period. The painting of icons, frescoes, and murals in churches and monasteries is a further manifestation of the growing role of the civilian elite, the archons, within the Coptic community. The patronage of these elite Copts who paid for such work, and the changes that overtook Egyptian society in general that allowed

this Coptic civilian elite to amass significant fortunes in the eighteenth century, will be discussed in more detail below.

In spite of the importance of these conditions and of their effects on artistic production, the study of Yuhanna as a painter has remained so far within a limited horizon. Two factors could be put forward to explain this restrictive view: first, the focus on the icons to the exclusion of written sources, and second, the historical methodologies that have been used.

Various scholars have relied on Yuhanna's surviving icons as the only source for the study of this artist, and they have produced interesting and important studies of these icons. This is partly because modern studies on Coptic life during the Ottoman period remain few, while studies on the Armenians in Egypt during the same period are almost nonexistent. Therefore, scholars interested in studying Yuhanna's icons within their historical context are faced with a shortage of works that can help them understand the context in which he lived and the social scene from which he emerged. In fact, that is why most studies that have been written about him touch on art and art history, with scholars focusing almost exclusively on the icons themselves, studying their various characters and the methods employed in their creation.

Yet this period produced a voluminous amount of archival material that historians are using to study numerous aspects of the society, economy, and culture of Egypt and of the Ottoman Empire. As a matter of fact, the volume of these historical sources is so abundant that those who do study them have to deal with the problem of having to sift through too much material to find the data that they are looking for. In other words, it is a problem of having too much, rather than not enough.

The archives include documents from Islamic law court records and from the archives of the Coptic Patriarchate, both of which have extensive material on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The archive that has proven to be the most useful for the present study is that of the shari'a court records for Cairo. Cairo had some thirteen courts, which were situated in the different parts of the city. In the city center were the courts of al-Bab al-'Ali, presided over by the Qadi al-Qudat—the two courts where inheritances were divided, notably the courts of Qisma 'Askariya and Qisma 'Arabiya, in addition to district courts in all the main

districts. The day-to-day affairs of each courthouse were recorded in the court's registers. These roughly cover the three centuries of Ottoman rule and run into several hundreds of registers. They are housed today at Egypt's National Archives, Dar al-Watha'iq al-Qawmiya in Cairo. They are an essential source for the daily life of ordinary people and contain a great variety of cases: contracts, *awqaf* (sing. *waqf*, pious endowment), legacies, marriages, divorces, and disputes.

In these registers, I was able to locate a large number of documents that relate to Yuhanna al-Armani and his family, as well as to the Armenian community of Cairo at large, over several decades. These documents include contracts of marriages taking place in the family, the purchases that different members undertook, the legacies of some of them when they died, and so on. The registers of the Qisma 'Arabiya court have, in particular, been most useful. It is this court that was primarily in charge of overseeing non-Muslim probate records. They are particularly rich with regard to family relationships. Normally, these inheritance and probate records document a deceased person's properties and his debts, if any. We thus find out what their assets consisted of, whether made up of houses, commercial buildings, workshops, or agricultural property. The deeds provide us with the identity of the deceased's surviving heirs, wife, children, or siblings, and their respective shares in the inheritance. Historians can thus elicit from these deeds a considerable amount of information about the social and economic status of individuals and their families, about their business transactions, and about the property that they owned. The identity of surviving heirs allows historians to reconstruct some of their family relations. It is there that I found valuable information on Yuhanna al-Armani, his family, and his social network. The registers also allow us to get a glimpse of the economic and social conditions of Armenians in Egypt, what their status was, the kinds of profession that they followed, and so on. This is particularly important since the Armenian community in Cairo does not seem to have records covering the eighteenth century, making these registers probably the only source on Armenians in Cairo at the time.

Similarly, the registers of the al-Bab al-'Ali court are a very important source for the study of Yuhanna in the context of eighteenth-century conditions. In the registers of al-Bab al-'Ali, we find cases concerned

with disputes and contracts, much like any of the other courts of the city, but those cases that are of most interest in the present context are those that deal with the management of *awqaf* and those related to the inspection and restoration of churches. The al-Bab al-'Ali court documents enable us to perceive some of the circumstances in which Yuhanna produced his works. The dates of the restoration of certain churches, recorded in these registers, can be compared to the dating of Yuhanna's icons which were commissioned for these churches. Finally, the registers of the court of the mosque of al-Salih Tala'i' ibn Ruzayq, the closest courthouse to Yuhanna's residence in a neighborhood where many Copts dwelled, also offer interesting details on Yuhanna's life and his social network.

Another mine of information is to be found in the documents of the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate in Cairo. Here, another kind of document helped to build up the mosaic of Yuhanna's life and his works. The Patriarchate has documents relating to the construction and restoration of churches and monasteries during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Some of these documents are copies of deeds recorded in the Islamic court registers, while others are manuscripts that were written in monasteries. They also provide information on the decoration of the churches and are therefore particularly useful in tracing the development of icon-painting. What is particularly interesting in the Coptic archives is that we can trace an increasing demand for icons in the eighteenth century, which provides a context for those that Yuhanna produced and which confirms what we know from other sources. We also find out from these documents vital information relevant to this artistic production. For instance, they tell us the dates of restorations of these buildings; they provide us with information on the number of buildings repaired or restored; they also indicate who financed the restoration; they sometimes even indicate the amount of money that was spent on such restorations.

Thus, we have three sources that shed light on the same phenomena: the icons themselves, the Islamic court registers, and the deeds in the Patriarchate. Interestingly enough, they complement each other in various ways. The dates for the restoration of a particular church, recorded at the Patriarchate, can be compared with the icons Yuhanna is known

to have painted for specific churches. The fact that so many church restorations are recorded in the Patriarchate documents is also significant for the volume of production of Yuhanna's work, indicating that church restoration and icon production went hand in hand. This fits in with production in another field, that of manuscripts. The various collections of Coptic manuscripts housed in Egypt's churches and monasteries—at least seventy percent of which were copied in the eighteenth century—are additional evidence of the volume of Christian artistic output during that period.

Needless to say, Yuhanna's icons, the body of work he produced, remain an important source of information on the man and his times. Thus, by taking into consideration the works he painted and the archival material deriving from various sources, we can tie the concrete cultural production to the social and economic conditions of the eighteenth century. Both types of sources, the visual and the written, are crucial to such a study. Through such sources it is possible to sketch Yuhanna al-Armani's biography and trace his various networks and relationships on the professional, familial, and sectarian levels.

2

Icon-painting in Eighteenth-century Egypt

The eighteenth century witnessed a remarkable increase in the production of religious icons, so much so that most Egyptian churches and monasteries still house a considerable number of artworks dating from that century. A visit to any church in Upper or Lower Egypt is likely to unearth several eighteenth-century icons. Even though a thorough catalogue of eighteenth-century Egyptian Coptic icons is as yet unavailable, it is enough to point out by way of example that the church of Abu Sayfayn in Old Cairo houses over one hundred eighteenth-century icons while the Mu‘allaqa (Hanging) Church, also in Old Cairo, has more than sixty. Since dozens of churches and monasteries are known to have been restored in the eighteenth century, the number of icons produced during that century might well exceed several hundred. Such a large number of icons painted during one century poses several important questions about the period, not least of which is why this phenomenon developed when it did and what were the circumstances that encouraged this great production and artistic revival.

Here I will argue that this phenomenon can best be understood as one manifestation of a period of artistic flourishing and cultural revival that began in the mid-seventeenth century and continued throughout most of the eighteenth century. Contrary to a view that had for long

been prevailing, several modern studies have shown that the era was *not* a period of decline in Egyptian history. Peter Gran, for example, has shown through his study of Islamic *hadith* scholarship that Egypt witnessed a period of cultural revival with secular inclinations in the eighteenth century.[1] Nelly Hanna, on the other hand, presented in her study of middle-class culture in Ottoman Egypt another aspect of this revival by focusing on the middle-class culture that developed outside the realm of official institutions. She suggested that there was a broader readership than is usually thought and that a literate culture existed outside of the institutions of higher education in the less formal context of literary salons.[2] The present study will argue along parallel lines to these works.

To fully appreciate the sudden rise of Yuhanna al-Armani on the scene of Coptic art history, we need to take into consideration the fact that there was a dramatic decline in the number of icons produced *before* the eighteenth century and to put forward a number of explanations for the re-emergence of icons in at the time Egypt.

The Rarity of Icons before the Eighteenth Century

Even though the production of icons has been important to the Coptic Church since ancient times, there is a long period just before the seventeenth century, from which we have no extant paintings. It appears as if no Coptic icons were painted from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries. Most modern scholars explain this gap of three hundred years by bringing up two factors. The first is the destruction of many churches and monasteries during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, recorded in the chronicles of the Mamluk period (1250–1517). Icons and other religious works of art were costly to produce and were primarily designed for use within religious buildings; with fewer churches in use, there was less demand for such artwork. The Egyptian Christian community experienced a number of cultural and political pressures during those centuries that saw a large number of Copts convert to Islam, gradually transforming the Coptic community into a numerical minority. The shrinking of the community, as well as the various political pressures it sustained, created a state of cultural stasis and adversely influenced the demand for icons. It potentially also impacted upon the

ability of the community to finance extensive building projects in which religious artwork would play a part.

Another explanation that has been advanced by a number of writers, without much in-depth exploration of the issue, is that old icons were destroyed by members of the Coptic community, with the aim of using them as fuel for the preparation of the chrism (or *myron*), consecrated holy oil.[3] This holy oil, an important part of the rituals of the Coptic Church, is used during the baptism, a ritual which is considered to be one of the seven sacraments of the Church, much in the same way as it is in other Orthodox churches. During this ritual, the oil was spread on the baptized person in a symbolic act to keep away evil spirits. The claim that icons were burned to make this oil was based on an argument that old icons were worn out by years of smoke coming from the candles that were lit in front of them. The icons became dark and the paintings lost their features. Consequently, they were removed from churches and burned as fuel.

The source for this piece of information is the German Dominican monk, Vansleb. Vansleb visited Egypt at the end of the seventeenth century, in 1672–73. He subsequently wrote two books, one on his travels and another on the Coptic Church .[4] Here he mentions that icons were burned for fuel. Modern scholars who have made use of his narrative on the burning of icons have not questioned what he states nor tried to look for corroboration of his words.[5] However, because the preparation of this oil was an important Church event, Coptic sources address this matter and they provide us with a more convincing explanation for it. From these sources we find out that the preparation of the chrism was discontinued in 1461 and was not resumed till 1703. Thus, for more than two centuries, the Coptic Church, according to its own sources, did not prepare any chrism. Since Vansleb visited Egypt at the end of the seventeenth century, he could not have witnessed the procedures himself, nor would any of the priests and Church figures he met have ever witnessed the procedures during their own lifetimes. This certainly casts doubts on his narrative and the claim that icons were burned as fuel.

Furthermore, the preparation of the chrism in 1703—after two centuries of interruption—is described in minute detail in Church documents without any mention of icons being burned.[6] The text describes

how Church officials discussed preparing the chrism that year and explains the various arrangements they made in securing the necessary provisions, including choosing suitable olive wood to use as fuel:

"They called for the blessed son Mu'allim 'Abd al-Sayyid al-Khayyat, the priest of both the church of the Virgin Mary at the monastery of Abu Ruways at the lower ditch, and the church of the Archangel Gabriel in the north, and they asked him to cut down an olive tree from the garden of the above-mentioned monastery in order to cook the chrism."[7] When the patriarch realized that the available amount of olive wood might not be sufficient for the procedure, he requested more wood, without any reference to using old icons.[8]

Even if we were to assume that old icons were sometimes used as fuel, doubtful as such a narrative might be, this would have primarily affected icons placed in Cairene churches. Since the preparation of the chrism traditionally took place at the monastery of Abu Maqqar in Wadi al-Natrun or else in one of the churches of Cairo, and since the Coptic patriarch himself had to preside over the procedures and celebrations, it would have been logical for the chrism preparation committee to resort to old icons from churches in Cairo and its environs if they were indeed in need of fuel. Yet icons disappeared from the churches and monasteries of Egypt *as a whole*, not just Cairo, in the late Middle Ages. Even provincial churches that were geographically far from chrism-making saw their icons decrease and disappear from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries. The 'icons-as-fuel' explanation poses more questions than it provides answers.

After the preparation of the chrism recorded in 1703, the procedure was repeated once more in the eighteenth century; chrism was prepared in 1786, and the arrangements were again recorded meticulously in Church documents, without any reference to the burning of icons for fuel.[9] Furthermore, chrism was prepared in the nineteenth century, in 1820, and assuming that icons were again used as fuel, this would have been the end of all eighteenth-century icons, yet they continue to survive in various Coptic churches around Egypt.[10]

The question of what happened to medieval icons and why they disappeared remains a difficult one. Art historian Zuzana Skálová has addressed the issue in her study of Coptic icons, proposing that

eighteenth-century artists like Ibrahim al-Nasikh and Yuhanna al-Armani *repainted* old icons of the church of Abu Sayfayn in Old Cairo, dating from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[11] (This particular church was in fact the patriarchal headquarters during the late Middle Ages; thus its icons would have been the first to be burned as fuel for the chrism, since, after all, the patriarch himself oversaw the procedure.) Possibly then, Ibrahim and Yuhanna may have painted their own icons over older works from the Middle Ages. Since wood was not abundant in Egypt, and given the erosion imposed by time and centuries of candle smoke on old icons, it might well have been an ingenious decision by Church figures to recycle the old icons by painting over them. In any case, the recycling of older material was a common practice in construction: old columns were often put in new buildings, decorated woods reused, and marble floors taken from one house and placed in another. Therefore this was well within the practices of the time, since it guaranteed that nothing was wasted and materials were used and reused until they could no longer be recycled.

However, even if this were to be the case, it could offer only a partial explanation for the absence of artistic production prior to the seventeenth century. In fact, this absence relates not only to icons but to most other forms of art as well. Coptic manuscripts from the fifteenth to seventeenth century are equally rare. Around seventy percent of extant Coptic manuscripts date back to the eighteenth century. Similarly, frescoes and wall paintings that date from that same earlier period are exceedingly scarce. So the phenomenon of the disappearance, as it were, of Coptic art includes not only icons but also manuscripts, frescoes, and various religious artwork. If icons were painted over, or burned for fuel, what happened to manuscripts and wall paintings of the same centuries?

Rather than offer explanations as to where or why the icons, manuscripts, and religious artworks of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries have disappeared, it is perhaps legitimate to ask whether in fact any such works were produced during these centuries in the first place.

It is most likely that the rarity—not total absence—of icons dating back to the pre-eighteenth century period is related to the almost complete suspension in the restoration or reconstruction of churches and

monasteries after the late Mamluk period (fifteenth century) until the mid-seventeenth century. There was no icon-painting because there were no new churches or monasteries built during this period. The increase in the number of icons painted from the late seventeenth century onward was due to a reverse trend that saw most Egyptian churches and monasteries rebuilt and restored.

The Revival of Icon Production

Like many other subjects of the Ottoman Empire living in Cairo, or in other parts of the territory, Yuhanna al-Armani's person embodied several cultural layers that co-existed or were superimposed one over the other. Because of this cultural complexity, it is useful to identify some of these layers and to try to assess how they may have had an impact on what he produced and the way he did it. We can read his life from within at least three distinct cultural circles: the culture of Cairo where he lived and worked, the culture of the Armenian community to which he belonged, and the culture of Jerusalem—a reference to the epithet 'al-Qudsi' frequently appended to his name. This mixture of cultures has often attracted the attention of art historians and has led some to focus on the sobriquet 'al-Qudsi' and to take Jerusalem as the main point of reference in understanding his icons. Jerusalem, as a point of cultural interaction and encounter between East and West, was seen as the most important influence on Yuhanna al-Armani's work to the neglect of other—more important—factors. One could add another cultural influence that had a bearing on his life and work: the Ottoman Empire in the eighteenth century was multicultural and multiethnic, and influences of these various cultures could have affected an icon-painter, adding one more dimension to the already sophisticated cultural makeup of an artist like Yuhanna al-Armani.

There have been controversies regarding the Jerusalem dimension of Yuhanna's formation. Art historians who study eighteenth-century icons in Egyptian churches are fully aware that there are large numbers of icons from this period, that many of them bear dates, and that a high proportion have the signatures of their painters. Many of these icons are signed 'Yuhanna al-Armani' and often 'Yuhanna al-Armani al-Qudsi.' Using the 'al-Qudsi' as evidence, a number of scholars have built arguments to the

effect that Yuhanna grew up in an Armenian family in Jerusalem; that it was in Jerusalem that he learnt to draw and paint before moving to Cairo as a fully formed artist, ready to practice his craft and spread his skills among Egyptian Copts.[12] In reality, the only evidence for this narrative is the title 'al-Qudsi' that he occasionally attached to his name.

This argument has given rise to another hypothesis. On the assumption that Yuhanna al-Armani was born and raised in Jerusalem, scholars have argued that his work provided a link with artistic traditions of Syria and Palestine, and it helped to diffuse them in Egypt. The artistic traditions of Syria and Palestine were themselves influenced by Western artistic traditions. The churches of Bilad al-Sham (Greater Syria) were, moreover, permeated not only by Byzantine influence, but by close and continual contacts with the Western Church. Under Ottoman rule, there was a greater presence of Catholics in the Ottoman Empire as a whole and in Bilad al-Sham in particular.[13] Thus, the conclusion reached is that the main influence on eighteenth-century Coptic art came from Europe.[14]

Other scholars argue for the importance of Byzantine influences on Yuhanna's art, suggesting an alternative channel for its transmission. Mat Immerzeel, for example, considers that Byzantine artistic traditions reached Egypt through Crete. In his view, after the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans in 1453, many residents of the imperial Byzantine capital—including a number of icon-painters—fled to the island of Crete, where they settled and continued to produce. But a couple of centuries later, in 1669, Crete itself came under Ottoman rule, and was integrated into the empire. This facilitated the movement of people and of ideas within the broad expanse of the empire, and so Western artistic traditions of icons appeared in Syria and Palestine through Crete.[15] And from the Levant, it took Yuhanna al-Qudsi, to carry the tradition to Egypt.

Thus, Yuhanna was the channel by which European traditions were passed on from Bilad al-Sham to Cairo. Stressing the Syrian influence on Coptic art, Tania Tribe writes:

> Towards the end of the eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth, the style of painters working in Greater Syria took on a more popular character, employing bright, primary colors and becoming less refined. But they still preserved the

> rhetorical qualities inherited from the post-Byzantine artistic tradition, employing well-accepted compositional formulae deriving from biblical texts and popular hagiographical narratives. The emphasis on narrative and storytelling that characterized the Eastern Mediterranean tradition of religious painting, with its frequent juxtaposition of words and images and the use of local Arab dress, décor and utensils in the representation of Christian stories, was preserved in Egypt in the school headed by Yuhanna and Ibrahim.[16]

Skálová proposes another channel by way of which European artistic traditions reached Yuhanna. She focuses on the contacts of Egyptian Christians (Melkites)[17] with the monastery of St. Catherine, as many of them visited this monastery on their way to Jerusalem on pilgrimage. For her, there were many foreign artists on the local scene producing icons for elite Coptic clients. The reason for this was that local artists could not receive a proper training in this art form because of the legal position of painters and painting in an Islamic society.[18] Thus, although the channels of transmission may vary, there is agreement among these scholars with regard to the importance of outside influences on the work of Yuhanna and on the cultural revival during the eighteenth century.

Moreover, most art historians have tended to date to the period a large number of unsigned and undated icons that share a similar style with the work of Yuhanna and Ibrahim al-Nasikh. These unsigned and undated icons, which are often attributed to Yuhanna and Ibrahim, are used as evidence to confirm the existence of an eighteenth-century artistic revival. Studies of the era's icon production have argued that it is Yuhanna himself who resurrected the icon-painting movement in Egypt and had the most influence during the eighteenth century, elaborating on his style and artistic contribution.

However, the evidence for such dating has not been confirmed and is open to question. I believe that this issue requires further investigation and that we need to reconsider the evidence. Doing this could lead us to the view that the revival of Coptic art was in fact not limited to the lifetime of either Yuhanna al-Armani or Ibrahim al-Nasikh. Instead one could argue that this resurgence of Coptic icon-painting began about half

a century before their time. This argument has important consequences for our understanding both of Yuhanna al-Armani and of the revival of Coptic art because what it really means is that prior to his lifetime, and prior to the influence of Bilad al-Sham and of Western artistic traditions, a revival was taking place as a result of local conditions and as a continuation of older traditions.

Much of the scholarly work on the subject has maintained that the role of foreign influences on Egyptian artists was the foundation of the eighteenth-century revival rather than attempting to explain this important artistic phenomenon from within its social and political context and from analyzing the local conditions which brought it about.

The Regional Context

Ottoman studies have witnessed significant development during the past two decades, and numerous studies have been published on various aspects of this rich period of history. Many people have written on the social structures of cities, on trading and the economy, on the influence of local provincial elites, and more recently on family history in several of the regions of the Ottoman state where archival sources are abundant. We now know much more about life in the empire than did historians of a generation ago.

However, a number of subjects have so far not been explored. Among them is the history of art in various parts of the Ottoman Empire. Though several studies have focused on the history of Ottoman architecture, the history of painting has not received much attention. Furthermore, while a number of studies have explored the arts of the Ottoman courts, artistic production outside the courts of the sultans, in other words the works produced for other than the ruling classes, has not been explored. Thus, it is not possible to compare Egypt's eighteenth-century icons with contemporary paintings from other provinces of the Ottoman Empire. It is hoped that such a study of Yuhanna al-Armani's work will encourage scholars of the Ottoman Empire to study the arts of its other provinces as a way of understanding society.

In the meantime, histories of Ottoman Egypt help us place Yuhanna's icons within their local context. Certainly, one cannot ignore the wider frameworks within which local phenomena developed; yet it

remains problematic to decide just what exactly is 'regional' and what is 'local,' especially when dealing with cultural phenomena, the origins of which are often difficult to trace and pinpoint. This becomes even more complex in a sophisticated and multicultural domain such as the Ottoman Empire.

One of the fundamental characteristics of the Ottoman Empire was its ethnic, religious, and cultural plurality. The empire included peoples with various cultures, identities, and beliefs, yet the Ottoman administration did not try to enforce a unified and universal Ottoman order on all its people; it did not attempt to impose the Turkish language on its subjects, nor did it try to impose its own cultural norms. The Ottoman framework was mainly an administrative one that involved the institutions of state and that ensured that people paid their taxes. But at the level of daily life, Ottoman rule did not attempt to change the customary local traditions of the various provinces, which were allowed to retain their distinct identities.

At the same time, the territorial extent of the empire was vast. Movement—of people, of goods, of influences within its geographical expanse—was a factor in creating cultural interaction. The Ottoman Empire, moreover, was deeply involved in world commerce, and as a result European merchants, many of them from the Mediterranean region, traveled within the Ottoman state and some of them settled there. Thus, the various cultures of the Mediterranean met at the great coastal cities of the empire as well as its provincial capitals. Cairo is one of the larger metropolises where numerous ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups lived. The historian André Raymond estimates that around 40,000 non-Egyptians inhabited Cairo in the eighteenth century, at a ratio of one foreigner for every six or eight Cairenes, including Turks, Armenians, Greeks, as well as Syrians, North Africans, and a small number of Franks or Europeans.[19] The same situation existed in other large cities like Istanbul and Aleppo.

The existence of a multicultural society is evident, but its impact is more difficult to assess. One aspect of this subject was explored in a recent study on Cairo by Nelly Hanna, who assessed the cultural history of middle-class Cairo through a broader understanding of both its Ottoman and Mediterranean contexts.[20] She linked the emergence

of this culture to broad political changes taking place and by the changing balance between the Ottoman capital and its provinces, or between central and local forces. Thus, a particular cultural trend was perceived to be the result not only of local and regional forces but also the result of certain material conditions that prevailed at the time. This book, unlike many other studies that deal with the cultures, whether of Muslim or of non-Muslim communities within the Ottoman Empire, and which explain many cultural phenomena in terms of the 'Coming of the West,' suggests an alternative approach to this issue. It shows that there was a dynamism within the local society and that it was able to engender these new cultural forms. It is along these lines that one can argue the case for Yuhanna al-Armani and for the cultural revival in Coptic art of the period.

Copts in the Context of Other Churches

Cultural exchanges and interaction between cultures are not simply transfers of traceable elements from one culture to another. Likewise, influences on religious iconography did not follow a simple path. Interaction could take a variety of forms, sometimes positive, sometimes less so. There were significant religious and theological differences between the various Christian sects and churches. The theological and religious positions of a church had an impact on its iconography and constituted a barrier that could restrict potential influence from other churches. Every church, for instance, has its own local saints and its own traditions of representing them. The collective memory of the Coptic Church includes a large number of saints who were martyred as they defended their faith in the face of another Church, that of the Holy Roman Empire. The Coptic Church has always tried to maintain its distinct culture and creed, independent of other churches and especially of the Chalcedonian churches. When Coptic Patriarch Ghubrial VIII (1587–1603) attempted to introduce the Gregorian calendar to Egypt, the believers came out in revolt against him, as a result of which the patriarch was unseated and imprisoned.[21] Copts were extremely suspicious of the Church of Rome so that any hint of interference or even cooperation was met by violent rejection. A big blow came in the mid-eighteenth century when the Catholics managed to attract a

Coptic bishop, the bishop of Jirja, to Catholicism in 1758. This incident unleashed a flood of anti-Catholic tracts in general and attacks on that bishop in particular. The Coptic patriarch addressed an epistle to his people warning them of the tricks of the 'Franks' and their attempt to lure more Copts to their church through the converted bishop. This dramatic incident is reflected in a tract written by the patriarch stating:

> Antony, who had previously been the bishop of Jirja in Upper Sa'id, has become now undeserving of this position because he has rejected true faith and correct belief . . . and followed the Franks . . . and now he signs on white paper and stamps it and they write on it what they want. And they send for our Coptic children in the hope that they would follow them, but this is not possible . . . . He has become excommunicated, rejected, cut-off, cast aside from all the offices of the Church.

The patriarch's epistle goes on to describe Catholics as traitors and heretics.[22] Perhaps not surprisingly, the bishop who replaced Antony, Anba Yusab al-Ubbah, devoted his time to attacking Catholicism and to warning Copts against mixing with them for fear of being affected by their 'false' ideas.[23]

Indeed, many travelers who visited Egypt in the late Ottoman period commented on the deep antipathy that Copts harbored toward Westerners in general, especially after what was perceived as Catholic infiltration in the eighteenth century. In fact, France's Catholic consul, Benoît de Maillet, who lived in Egypt for a longer time (1692–1700) than most other Europeans, described how strongly those people "hate us so that when one of them wants to be cruel to another and insult him he calls him 'Frank'; this is their way of expressing their disdain of someone."[24] Similarly, the Italian traveler Sonnini de Manoncour commented in 1778 that:

> The name of *Franks*, by which, in the East, are designated all Europeans, whatever may be their country, honoured among the Turks, but despised in the towns of Lower Egypt, is held

> in abhorrence by the inhabitants of the Said. This aversion is the work of the Copts, who are more numerous there than in the northern parts of Egypt. They cannot, with any degree of patience, bear that a few missionaries should come from Italy for the express purpose of preaching against them, treating them openly as heretics and *dogs*, and damning them without mercy."[25]

This deep-seated antipathy was also noticed by the Protestant traveler Niebuhr, who wrote that:

> The Copts have an insurmountable aversion to the Romish Church. . . . My friend saw, in the hands of the Egyptian, a dictionary of a great many genuine old Coptic words, with their explanations in Arabic. He was also informed by Ibrahim Ennasch, that there still are, in several convents in Upper Egypt, a good number of Coptic books; but his informer knew nothing of their nature or contents. The clergy conceal these books with great care, for fear, as they say, lest the Catholics carry them off, and, after falsifying their contents, print them in Europe.[26]

It therefore seems that Copts were not receptive to new elements that represented the dogmas or doctrines of foreign churches, such as the Catholic Church, which was perceived as an enemy. The feelings of mistrust, as we have seen, were in fact strengthened during the eighteenth century and encouraged by the Church leaders, for the reasons that were mentioned earlier.

Coptic Icons and Other Painting Traditions

The Ottoman context allows us to understand how individuals and groups from various parts of the world came to settle in Egypt, since the empire allowed freedom of travel, residence, and employment for its subjects within its vast domains. As Ottoman subjects, *ulama*, scholars, students, pilgrims, merchants, and state officials moved freely within the empire. Icon-painters were, naturally, a minority among all those people, as the demand for their products was limited.

Since there were hardly any significant projects to build or restore churches and monasteries before the mid-seventeenth century, the demand for new icons was not high. When increasing numbers of churches were rebuilt and restored in the eighteenth century, icon-painters—Egyptians, Syrians, Turks, and Armenians—also increased. Their clients were largely Copts and therefore the subjects depicted were primarily Coptic subjects; icons of local Coptic saints predominated. For example, the Egyptian saint Abu Sayfayn, who was often depicted in ancient Coptic icons, was likewise a popular saint in the seventeenth and eighteenth century and many surviving icons depict him.

With such a multitude of cultural models and traditions it is difficult to determine how painters adapted local styles. Did provincial artists confine themselves to the local traditions that matched their clients' tastes? Or did minority artists like Yuhanna adapt their own cultural traditions to suit local taste? These are complex questions to answer and they require significant efforts from art historians, for they require an analysis of artistic styles and the exploitation of a variety of historical sources.

However, two main innovative characteristics of icon-painting in Egypt have their parallels in contemporary art produced in Istanbul. First, artists began signing their paintings, whereas traditionally this art form was anonymous. In Egypt, this tradition began with Ibrahim al-Nasikh and Yuhanna al-Armani in the eighteenth century, the same period during which Ottoman artists began signing the illustrations that adorned their manuscripts.[27]

Increasingly, artists depicted local saints, that is, the saints with whom the faithful were familiar, rather than the traditional characters of Scripture. Among these saints, frequently used as the subjects of late Ottoman icons, were relative newcomers on the Coptic scene such as St. Takla Haymanot the Ethiopian (c. 1215–1313) and St. Barsum al-'Iryan (Barsum the Naked, d. 1317). Warrior saints, such as St. George, Abu Sayfayn (St. Mercurius), Theodore the Oriental, and Mar Buqtur, were also popular subjects of icons. The icons of the period, especially Yuhanna and Ibrahim's works, are characterized by their use of inscriptions on the icons narrating the life of the saints or the biblical stories depicted. Finally, the very styles in which the saints were depicted, including facial expressions and dress, were inspired by contemporary local reality.[28]

A parallel development was taking place in Istanbul during the same period¸where Ottoman court painting was experimenting with a different kind of subject matter. For centuries it had focused exclusively on the sultans and senior state officials, but during this period there emerged paintings that showed various kinds of public celebrations; here, a larger public, including ordinary people, or at least people who were neither the courtiers nor upper state bureaucrats, made their appearance.[29]

The Eastern Christian Context

The Coptic and Armenian churches share some basic creeds and beliefs. Both churches are monophysite, having rejected the doctrine of the Council of Chalcedon in 451, believing in the altogether divine nature of Christ. The two churches enjoyed a special relationship, one that grew particularly close after the eleventh century when a considerable number of Armenians came to settle in Egypt. However, on the subject of icons, these churches differed.

Icons were an important part of Coptic churches and occupied a significant portion of their space. It would be difficult to imagine these churches devoid of their icons, which are an essential part, not only of the visual composition but of the rituals that churchgoers follow. In fact, the veneration of icons became an important part of Coptic rituals as is made clear in the tenth-century writings of Sawirus ibn al-Muqaffa'.[30] Coptic liturgy specified that icons—'painted with colors'—of martyrs and saints whose lives are read out to the people should be hung in the churches, the visual dimension thus confirming the words that were read or recited.[31] The Coptic Church's official history is in fact replete with narratives of miracles that were linked to icons, the icon itself being the object of spirituality.[32] Special rituals and liturgy, including certain rounds of the Palm Sunday procession, are designated to venerate and bless icons within the church every year: "each church has its own ritual whereby they walk around holding an olive branch and stop at each corner of the church and in front of the icons to read particular chapters of the Holy Bible."[33] Icons, in short, were part and parcel of the rituals habitually undertaken in the Coptic Church.

Things were, in some ways, radically different with regard to the Armenian Church. Many studies have shown that Armenians were

in fact iconoclasts who rejected the idea of venerating icons or even merely hanging them in churches.[34] Icon-painting was not a part of the practice of the Armenian Church; therefore Armenian churches are traditionally free of icons. This applies to Armenian communities and churches in various parts of the world. A perusal of the churches during our period in different cities in Armenia, or cities where there were significant Armenian communities—Istanbul, Jerusalem, and Aleppo, for example—confirms the absence of icons as church decorations in all the churches I was able to identify. However, that does not mean that there was no artwork linked to churches. In fact, Armenian artists were famous for their skillful illumination of manuscripts.[35] In contrast to the simplicity of Armenian church interiors, the community focused its attention and patronage on less ostentatious religious artwork such as theological and liturgical manuscripts.

One cannot then explain the presence of an Armenian artist painting in Coptic churches by arguing that non-Chalcedonian churches shared a similar iconographic tradition. They did not. Yuhanna would not have been painting icons for Coptic churches the way he would have painted them for an Armenian church, as some have suggested, simply because there was no 'Armenian iconographic tradition.' This phenomenon is better understood within a Coptic context: Copts could easily accept an Armenian artist painting icons in their churches, of subjects related to their Church and its saints, and in styles familiar to them, since the man himself belonged to the non-Chalcedonian orthodox creed. It is thus the local context that can explain how Yuhanna al-Armani was accepted and his work integrated into the Coptic Church.

The Local Context

Regional and local factors both had an impact on culture and society in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The active commercial exchange between various parts of the Ottoman Empire and the continuous travel by merchants, students, scholars, officials, and army officers were channels that facilitated cultural exchange and transfer of cultural influences. More specifically, these centuries witnessed an increased European influence and presence in certain parts of the Ottoman state, like Syria, an influence consolidated by the legal

framework of the capitulations. Thus, there were multiple cultural dynamics at work.

Historians have argued that the state structures of the Ottoman Empire became more decentralized; this process is sometimes dated to the latter part of the sixteenth century, but more often to the eighteenth century. It was a state of affairs that allowed the rise of local elites who gained prerogatives at the expense of the state's authority, although there were significant differences between one region and another. The state needed to rely on local notables and elites in order to protect and sustain its economic interests. This development helped strengthen local identities in the various provinces so much so that by the eighteenth century, some provinces were moving toward more autonomy from the central authorities. The relationship between the center in Istanbul and some of the provinces slowly turned into one in which the provinces gave their allegiance to the Sultanate and paid their financial dues and annual tributes in return for greater prerogatives granted to local elites in running the everyday affairs of these provinces. Thus, the lines demarcating what is local and what is regional and the interaction between the two are not easy to disentangle.

Perhaps due to this decentralization of the Ottoman Empire, one can observe in the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries certain local practices that allowed non-Muslim communities throughout the Empire opportunities to flourish with a remarkable degree of tolerance. In Egypt, a clear manifestation can be seen in the number of churches that were built or restored with no official opposition and in the rise of Coptic *a'yan* or notables who reached not only prominence within their own community but also within society as a whole. Another manifestation was that there was a closer integration between the Coptic community and society at large, because relationships were developed along the lines of interests, beyond the narrow confines of ethnic and religious communities.

This was true for different parts of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, for example, André Raymond's study of Aleppo traces how the city's Christian community flourished during that period, while Thomas Phillipp's findings identify a similar trend affecting the Christians of both Damascus and Aleppo.[36] Egyptian society in the eighteenth century

followed a parallel trend, and its Christian community, like those of Bilad al-Sham, benefited from the emerging conditions.

Egypt had witnessed important political and administrative transformations since the beginning of the seventeenth century. One of these was that vast prerogatives and powers were granted to the pasha, the official representative of the Ottoman state. The pasha had the power to appoint senior administrative officers without requiring the Sublime Porte's approval. Such developments allowed for the rise of the military officers of the various regiments who gradually came to monopolize real power in Egypt, at the expense of the pasha's authority. Moreover, the end of Ottoman military expansion by the end of the seventeenth century was another factor for change in Ottoman Egypt: the province was no longer a launching pad for military campaigns, and so the governors and senior military officers settled down and turned from being professional military men to bureaucrats. Once they were not directly involved in military activities, these men directed their interest to economic and political activities.[37] Toward the end of the seventeenth century, the neo-Mamluk households started to emerge as the real hegemonic powers that controlled political life in Egypt. They competed with the army officers over power until they managed to gain control of the major economic resources in the eighteenth century. Eventually, the official representative of the Sultanate, the pasha, became a ruler in name only as real power resided with the Mamluk amirs. The leading historian of the period, 'Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti, summarized the state of affairs thus:

> The Year 1188 (March 14, 1774–March 3, 1775): As the year began, the governor of Egypt was Khalil Pasha. Restricted (from the exercise of his functions), he possessed nothing of the office except the name and the title on paper; full power of action lay with the great amir Muhammad Bey Abu'l-Dahab. The amirs and men of state were his mamluks or protégés.[38]

The rise of the Mamluk households was accompanied by a parallel rise of high *ulama*; for in contrast to the period when the military officers of the Ottoman *ojacks*, whose legitimacy depended on the

legitimate sultan in Istanbul, had true power in Egypt, the Mamluk amirs needed the *ulama* to bestow a semblance of legitimacy on their status and rule. Likewise, the rise of Coptic *a'yan* was linked to the rise of the Mamluk households in which many of them worked. As the senior amirs and military officers rose in power, the influence of high-ranking Coptic *mubashir*s (scribes and bureaucrats) in their service also increased. Coptic *mubashir*s were crucial in helping the *amir*s control various financial and administrative affairs in Egypt and thus their wealth increased in proportion to that of their master.

By the eighteenth century there were three main power groups involved in the financial administration in Egypt: Mamluk *amir*s, who came to control the tax system, especially the land tax which was the main source of state revenue; the Coptic *mubashir*s, who were experienced in auditing taxation and managing finances, both state finances and those of private individuals like the Mamluks for whom they worked; high *ulama*, especially those that were linked to the Azhar who provided religious leadership and spiritual guidance to the population as a whole and to the ruling amirs in particular. Many of them also stood to make financial gains from this close relationship with the ruling class. Naturally, economic and social interests tied these three main powers together. As part of these developments, Coptic *mubashir*s used considerable portions of their growing wealth and influence to the benefit of their religious community.[39]

The increase in wealth and influence that Coptic *mubashir*s enjoyed naturally brought with it social dividends: they gained important prestige and political influence that they sought to confirm in a number of ways. One way in which Coptic scribes manifested their newly gained visibility, especially within their religious community, was through lavish spending on religious institutions and religious festivities and ceremonies, much as other wealthy elites did. It was a way of announcing their prosperity and affirming their new status within the community. Furthermore, a spirit of tolerance and coexistence spread among Egyptian Copts and Muslims during this period, for the new economic interests bound Coptic scribes to Mamluk *amir*s as well as to Muslim men of religion.

Thus, from about the second half of the seventeenth century

Coptic scribes patronized a real revival within their community. Using their contacts with the ruling class—with the men of state and men of religion equally—and within this atmosphere of tolerance, they were able to obtain official permits sanctioning the building and restoration of churches and monasteries. (Non-Muslim religious communities needed to gain official approval to establish or restore any religious building.) There are tens of surviving documents that explain how churches were rebuilt and restored during this period. Naturally, this upsurge in building work was accompanied by an artistic revival as manuscripts were copied and icons and wall-paintings were commissioned to adorn the new or newly restored religious structures.[40]

This revival is in fact at the core of the matter. The artistic resurgence of icon-painting in the eighteenth century was not due to increased Western influence in Egypt that led to the rise of Western-trained artists. Nor is the disappearance of icons before the seventeenth century—in my view—due to their use as fuel for the preparation of the chrism. Rather, I suggest, this trend came about as a consequence of the impulse to build and restore churches and monasteries and the resulting need to decorate them with icons and frescoes and supply them with liturgical manuscripts (and other artistic works that have not yet received sufficient scholarly attention). All these works were needed for the churches and monasteries to resume functioning properly. It was the demand for such works that created the artistic revival and the patronage of the new civilian elite that was financing these works. Thus, we can in fact date back the revival of icon-painting to the mid-seventeenth century, not the mid-eighteenth century.

The local context of the Armenian community in Egypt can also be explored in relation to Armenian communities elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire. More of this will be discussed below. However, it is important to note that the Armenian community in Egypt enjoyed considerable autonomy in managing its own affairs, independent of the Armenian Church. Contrary to common assumptions, the Armenian patriarch in Istanbul, who was nominally in charge of all Orthodox churches within the Ottoman Empire, does not seem to have had any significant influence or control over the Armenian community in Egypt. In addition to its relative autonomy from the Armenian Church, the

Armenian Egyptian community was remarkably well integrated with Egyptian Copts in both religious and social affairs (see Chapter 4). Thus, for example, despite the clear iconoclastic stance of the Armenian Church, Armenians did paint icons in Egypt—albeit only for Coptic churches. The Armenian community in Aleppo, on the other hand, did not engage in icon-painting; they specialized in other crafts such as sculpture and frescoes, but not icon-painting.[41]

So how could we then discuss local and foreign influences? How can we decide which measures and traditions informed Yuhanna al-Armani's icon-painting? Did he paint according to the traditions of the iconoclastic Armenian Church? Did he really carry traditions back from Jerusalem? Or did he paint according to local Egyptian traditions?

One further dimension can help us to understand how to place the icons of Yuhanna and other artists. This is the appearance of a 'secular' trend that seems to have had an impact on the Coptic community at the time. By secular trend, I refer essentially to the rise of a lay civilian elite, the archons, or *arakhina*, as they were known in Arabic, within the community, displacing the authority of the clergy and their influence on the community as a whole. These archons controlled the various affairs of the community, including Church affairs. It was they, rather than the patriarchs and bishops, who became the true leaders of the community, with the acquiescence of Church authorities. This non-religious, lay, representation of the Coptic community understandably had a number of consequences.[42]

The study of this trend can help us to understand certain changes taking place in Egyptian society as a whole, notably a trend toward secularization of society. This is a subject that is worthy of further exploration with regard to other groups in society, because it is not likely that the Copts underwent such a trend alone. There is good reason to believe that the phenomenon was part of a larger context; for example, Nelly Hanna has discussed the fact that the guilds were making *awqaf* that did not exactly follow religious rules but were instead a combination of *waqf* law (religious) and guild law (non religious). In general, this issue is worth pursuing because it may eventually help us understand some of the developments of the nineteenth century, even if they are not specific to the Coptic community.

Of relevance to our discussion here is the transfer of religious artistic production—mainly manuscript copying, icon-painting and frescoes—from an occupation for men of religion—priests and monks—to a profession exercised by laymen. Artists like Yuhanna al-Armani were a consequence of this change.

3

Egyptian Icons before Yuhanna al-Armani

Yuhanna al-Armani's ubiquitous works were part of a broader revival in icon production in Egypt, one that, it could be argued, preceded Yuhanna himself. In fact, the revival in icon-painting that Egypt witnessed since the mid-seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth is closely tied to the movement of restoring, conserving and—though more rarely—establishing churches and monasteries throughout the country.

The building and conservation of churches and monasteries has long been a sensitive subject in Egyptian culture under the Islamic state. Debates on this subject have been the cause for sectarian strife, as Islamic jurisprudence contains a number of provisions that restrict the construction of churches. Even though there are variations in interpretation between the four main schools of Muslim *fiqh* or jurisprudence, there is general agreement between them that there should be restrictions on the restoration of already existing churches and monasteries and strict limits on the construction of new ones. However, at the level of practice, we can see a somewhat different picture with regard to the later Ottoman period. Egypt and other Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire underwent, as of the mid-seventeenth century, important social and political transformations. As a result, religious scholars

were increasingly expressing more tolerant opinions on this matter and allowing the restoration and construction of Coptic churches and monasteries throughout Egypt, with the approval of the ruling political authorities.[43]

This change in attitude was an important factor behind the restoration of churches and monasteries. Prior to the seventeenth century, people who took the initiative to try to restore churches were faced with a certain resistance from the authorities, both religious and political. In fact, it is rare to find references to such activities in historical sources prior to the seventeenth century. After the mid-seventeenth century and during the eighteenth century, the situation started to change. By then, the restoration movement became so dynamic and far-reaching that almost all historical churches in Egypt underwent some form of conservation or restoration during this period. This cannot be explained simply by reference to the increased wealth of the Coptic lay elite, for the community had always had wealthy members among it. We know that under the Mamluk sultans (1250–1517), for instance, Copts had occupied important positions within state bureaucracy, particularly in the finance and taxation departments. Some of them had, as a result, been able to accumulate reasonable levels of wealth. But the Mamluk period was not noted for restoration or construction of churches. From the seventeenth century onward, the economic prominence of Coptic notables, coupled with the tolerant atmosphere of the time, was an inducement to finance the restoration and reconstruction.

Members of the Coptic civilian elite were able to make use of their close relationships with the men who formed part of the power structure, whether government administrators or Muslim religious scholars, in order to secure permission for church building and restoration. In fact, the surviving documents show us the administrative and political maneuvering that some of these Copts undertook in order to get the approval for the construction or restoration of religious buildings. Typically, this could take the form of either going to one of the influential Mamluk *amir*s to ask for his support or of asking a religious scholar for a *fatwa* (religious advice) on the matter. One of the documents in the archives of the Patriarchate, for instance, mentions that in the month of Ragab 1133/January 1700 Guirguis Sidarus, a *mubashir* who was in the

employment of Amir Yusuf Bey Mir Liwa, informed this *amir* that the walls of the church of al-Dayr were cracking and could collapse at any moment on passersby. Amir Yusuf forwarded the petition to the Qadi al-Qudat, the highest judicial authority. The Qadi al-Qudat then sent his team of inspectors, the Kashshaf al-Awqaf, to visit the premises and inquire about the condition of the building. As expected, the report that they wrote following the inspection coincided with the expectations of the *amir* and the *mubashir* who had initiated the matter; they were thus able to obtain the permit.[44]

Another mechanism was used by *mu'allim* Ibrahim Jawhari, one of the more famous Copts of the latter part of the eighteenth century, when he wanted to restore a church in Alexandria. He addressed one of the religious scholars with a question to which the scholar answered in a *fatwa*, giving his religious advice on the matter. In 1193/1770 he addressed one of the *mufti*s, asking him what action should be taken if a Coptic monastery was falling apart, its walls fissured and about to collapse, and the experts in the field declared it to be unsafe; those inside feared that thieves or street dwellers would penetrate it. Should the damaged parts be repaired? Such was the direct question to which *mu'allim* Ibrahim Jawhari wanted an answer. The *mufti*, who belonged to the Hanafi school of law, answered that the monks could restore what had been damaged.[45] On the basis of such a document, the building works could go ahead.

By exploiting their ties with those in power, the Coptic notables thus managed to get permissions such as these time and time again. Tied to the building and restoration movement was the need to furnish and decorate these churches and monasteries with manuscripts, icons, and wall-paintings.

It is beyond the scope of this study to survey all the churches and monasteries that were restored or rebuilt during those centuries. This is an important topic and it is to be hoped that scholars will try to undertake a thorough catalogue of Coptic monuments of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, a cursory survey indicates that all the churches of Cairo at least were the object of restoration. In some of these churches, the older parts of the buildings were restored; in others, new sections were added or the old buildings were expanded. A few

examples are given here to show some of the churches restored during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

1. Dayr Mar Guirguis, the convent at Qasr al-Sham‘ in Old Cairo where the church, including its ceiling, was rebuilt in 1656.[46]

2. Church of the Virgin in Harat Zuwayla was restored, decorated, and furnished with new manuscripts by Mu‘allim Yuhanna Abu Masri (d. c. 1709). Mu‘allim Abu Masri was one of the senior accountants at the treasury *(mubashir bi-l-khazina al-‘amira)*.[47]

3. The Hanging Church of the Virgin was restored at the expense of Mu‘allim Guirguis Abu Mansur al-Tukhi (d. 1718), who was the *mubashir* (chief financial manager/overseer) for the amir Murad Katkhuda Mustahfazan.[48]

4. The same Guirguis Abu Mansur also paid for the restoration of the church of the Virgin in Harat al-Rum.[49]

5. The Church of the Archangel Michael in Old Cairo was restored by Mu‘allim Lutf-Allah Abu Yusuf (d. 1720), *mubashir* for the amir Muhammad Kadak Katkhuda Mustahfazan.[50]

6. Abu Yusuf also restored the church of Mar Mina at Fumm al-Khalij.[51]

7. The church of Babylon al-Daraj in Old Cairo was restored in 1721 when Mu‘allim Guirguis ibn Sidarus obtained a permission for restoration after its walls had collapsed.[52]

8. The monastery of Anba Bula on the Red Sea was brought back to life after being abandoned for some 119 years. In 1732, a new church was built at the monastery at the expense of Mu‘allim Guirguis Yusuf al-Suruji. To celebrate the occasion, Mu‘allim Guirguis invited the patriarch and other important members of the Coptic community to attend; he prepared a caravan to depart from Cairo to travel to

the monastery to attend the church's consecration. The restoration and the celebrations were quite costly. The church documents also record that the caravan carried gifts, including icons of martyrs and saints, which were to be placed in the new building.[53] Among the artists commissioned to decorate the church and copy new manuscripts was Ibrahim al-Nasikh, Yuhanna's colleague and partner in icon-painting.

9. In 1778, the famous Mu'allim Ibrahim Jawhari established another church at the same monastery of Anba Bula dedicated to the saint Abu Sayfayn.[54]

Many of the Coptic monasteries that had been abandoned in the preceding centuries, such as the monasteries of Dayr al-Maymun, Dayr Barsum al-'Iryan, or Dayr al-Malak Ghibra'il (Archangel Gabriel) in Fayyum, were brought back into use, at least as shrines and churches, even if no monks returned to inhabit them.[55]

These numerous building activities suggest that the members of the Coptic elite were competing among themselves in acts of patronizing and renovating churches and monasteries. Many of them established extensive pious foundations *(awqaf)* to support these institutions. In doing so, they were acting in a way parallel to that of the ruling elite, the Mamluks in Cairo, possibly in an attempt to emulate them. The rise of these Mamluks to wealth and power was accompanied by considerable public construction. One could cite one or two well-known examples from the mid-eighteenth century, such as 'Uthman Katkhuda al-Qazdughli, who built up a whole new quarter in the south of Birkat al-Azbakiya, of which the mosque, at the tip of Qasr al-Nil street, still survives, or 'Abd al-Rahman Katkhuda, whose well-known public fountain and elementary school *(sabil kuttab)* is considered as one of the jewels of al-Muizz street in the old city. Whether for the ruling Mamluks or for the Coptic elite, public construction was linked to their rising notability.

It was not only religious buildings that were the object of new activity, but various other kinds of artistic production were also being generously financed and actively produced. In fact, this period saw a major resurgence in the copying of manuscripts and in wall-paintings or frescoes. A

quick survey of collections of Coptic manuscripts shows that manuscript production was very active in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, some being of new works and some copies of older ones. Most of the Coptic manuscripts that survive to our day date back to this late Ottoman period. What is even more important to note is that scribes and copyists were not concentrated in Cairo but were, on the contrary, active all over Egypt, because the demand for manuscripts was linked to the construction or renovation of churches and monasteries that were located in different parts of Egypt.[56]

Another interesting development also occurred concurrently. More and more Copts were acquiring books and manuscripts for their home libraries. Again, this is a trend that was already noted to have existed among other social groups in Cairo: amirs, merchants, tradesmen, and, occasionally, craftsmen. Likewise, it appears that Copts were using the icons not only in their churches but also in their homes. In fact, there are numerous references in inscriptions to the practice of keeping icons at home and commissioning artists to paint them specifically for home use. One such household icon of the Archangel Gabriel, dated 1790, survives at the Coptic Museum in Cairo. Its inscription indicates that it was commissioned for the house of Mu'allim Guirguis Fanus.[57] This was not essentially for aesthetic purposes but mainly for religious ones. An icon in a house gave its inhabitants blessings and could be seen as a protection from adversity. Private collections could potentially form a significant market for these objects.

Our protagonist, Yuhanna al-Armani, too, was involved in these privately commissioned works, and painted icons that were to be placed in individual homes. One of these was of the highly venerated saint, Dumyana. This icon eventually ended up in the Mu'allaqa, the Hanging Church in Old Cairo. Donated to the church by a Coptic family, the icon bears the inscription: "painted for the house of Mu'allim Guirguis son of the late Mu'allim Mikha'il al-Faydawi, by the humble Hanna al-Armani."[58] Thus, the cultural trend that had started off to fulfill the strict needs of the church or the monastery came to expand as private demand sprang up for icons for home use.

One could propose, on the basis of these facts, a couple of hypotheses. In the first place, that there was a link between the increased

production of icon-paintings and the expansion in church restoration and reconstruction. In the second place, these trends became apparent before Yuhanna al-Armani had developed his own career. In fact, a number of documents from this period clearly indicate that several churches and monasteries were decorated with new icons before Yuhanna al-Armani became active in this field. One document, for example, states that the Mu'allim Manqariyus ibn Ibrahim (known as Dik Abyad) built the Church of the Virgin at Maadi and had it decorated with icons prior to his death in 1150/1737, that is, some years before Yuhanna appeared on the scene.[59] All the references to church restorations cited earlier also included the decorations and furnishing of the churches in question, which usually implies the painting of icons.

In view of this, there is no longer any reason to attribute all the unsigned and undated icons to the period of Yuhanna, as has often been done. It is in fact very possible that some of these were produced before his time. Historical sources also provide us with the names of a number of icon-painters who preceded Yuhanna. Most famous among them probably was Suryal the son of the priest Abu al-Minna, referred to in documents as "the Egyptian painter of icons."[60] Suryal was active at least until 1692. The problem that Suryal and his generation of icon-painters pose for modern historians is that, unlike Ibrahim al-Nasikh and Yuhanna al-Armani, they did not sign their works. Consequently, we only know about them from references to them in written works. As a result, we have no definitive means of identifying their icons, of estimating their number or their location. Even some of Yuhanna's contemporaries did not sign their icons. We know their names from other sources, but we have no signatures on icons and therefore it remains difficult or impossible to identify their icons among surviving works. These include, for example, Mu'allim Mikha'il al-Musawwir, son of Mu'allim Hanna al-Musawwir al-Shami.[61] Yuhanna al-Armani could therefore draw upon the work of many icon-painters who were active before his time.

Likewise, before Yuhanna's lifetime we could trace another source of inspiration for icon-painters, notably in the illustrations that can be found in manuscripts. In the illustrations that decorate many surviving manuscripts we find the same subject matter found in the icons, notably

stories of Christ, biblical stories, and stories of saints and martyrs. Among the many examples of illustrations in manuscripts are those that contain the paintings by members of the Abu al-Mina family of priests, to whom Suryal Abu al-Mina al-Musawwir belonged. Their work included many illustrations in the manuscripts they copied, although they did not sign these works. Perhaps the most renowned and exquisite among them is a manuscript of the New Testament (the four Gospels) housed at the Coptic Museum Library in Cairo and dating to 1689. The copyist of this manuscript illustrated most of the biblical stories.[62] Another manuscript, dated 1678, also includes thirteen beautiful and rather unusual illustrations of different miracles of the Virgin Mary.[63] In fact, a whole list of illustrated manuscripts from the second half of the seventeenth century survives. All of them were copied and illustrated by Coptic scribes and artists. Among the most famous manuscript copyists/illustrators of the eighteenth century are the priest Dawud,[64] Butrus Sa'd of Umm Khinan,[65] and Yuhanna Mikha'il, several of whose illustrated manuscripts from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries survive.

The most famous artist who excelled at both the copying of manuscripts and icon-painting was Ibrahim al-Nasikh, Yuhanna al-Armani's colleague and partner.[66] This artist was able to move with ease from the technique of painting on wood to that of painting on paper. It is possible that others were doing the same thing and that earlier painters of icons were also decorating manuscripts. But he is the first whom we can identify with certainty.

A more careful study of the production of icons before Yuhanna al-Armani's time could provide us with a better understanding both of his own work and of the many unsigned works by unidentified painters. These works have been ascribed by many art historians to either Yuhanna al-Armani or Ibrahim al-Nasikh, or to both men jointly. They base these claims largely on analyses of the similarities in artistic styles. Even though this is not technically my field of expertise, I would hazard to suggest that these icons might very well be the works of artists who preceded Ibrahim al-Nasikh and Yuhanna al-Armani, artists who were active during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and who were not in the habit of signing their paintings. Signing one's name was

in fact not yet an established tradition and most icon-painters did not sign their work. As we have seen above, historical and archival evidence suggests that prior to these two well-known painters, other artists were indeed active in painting icons for churches. Since both Yuhanna and Ibrahim in large measure continued already existing painting traditions, it is difficult to distinguish their icons from those of the earlier artists who preceded them and whom they were—most probably—imitating and emulating. This might be one reason why so many icons, some of which were probably older than Ibrahim and Yuhanna's time, are often ascribed to them. It would be useful for art historians to compare unsigned icons to the miniatures in manuscripts in order to discern any similarities of style or subject matter between these works. Since most manuscripts were signed by their copiers, their copyists/illustrators are usually known. This might help us identify the names of copyists who also painted icons.

4

The Armenian Community in Egypt

It is a well-known fact that many Armenians, of varying wealth, power, and social integration, inhabited the various cities of the Ottoman Empire. A distinct, if relatively small, Armenian community lived in Egypt during the late Ottoman period. The study of the history of this community might help us shed light on the wider context in which Yuhanna al-Armani lived and functioned. A look at the condition of Armenians living in Egypt can illuminate some of the social and cultural traditions that this community practiced and their relationship to their social surroundings in Egypt. It can help us to see if the culture of the Armenians of Egypt was closer to that of Egyptian society of the late Ottoman period, or if the members of this community adhered to their own distinct cultural traditions that they brought with them when immigrating to Egypt. And, most important for the context of the present work, is the question of the cultural influences, whether Armenian or Coptic or both, that had an impact on the icons of Yuhanna al-Armani.

Unfortunately, we have little knowledge about the Armenian community of Egypt during the Ottoman period and no studies have covered the subject with any depth or detail. The little that is written about Armenians in Egypt focuses on Fatimid times (tenth to twelfth centuries) and then jumps over the Middle Ages to study the community of the

nineteenth century. The three centuries of Ottoman rule in Egypt are left out. One historian who has studied the Armenian community of Syria argues that the historical sources that survive of Egypt's Armenian community of the Ayyubid and Mamluk period are scant due to the decline in the status of its members following the downfall of the Fatimids, the destruction of Armenian churches, and the abolishing of their bishopric.[67] Since the community had shrunk, it left few traces, most of which did not survive. Indeed this seems like the most logical explanation; for the Armenian community in Egypt possesses no archives, and no documents or manuscripts have been preserved from this period. Hence historians must rely on the Shari'a court records and the documents in the Coptic Patriarchate Archives to study the Armenian community of the Ottoman period.

The lacunae in historical sources and studies notwithstanding, we know that Armenian communities had settled in Egypt at least since the Fatimid period. The celebrated Fatimid *wazir*, Badr al-Jamali (eleventh century) was of Armenian origin, and is reported to have brought with him a large group of Armenians to settle in Egypt. During that same period, a few episodes seem to indicate the existence of a religious dimension in Armenian settlement in Egypt. One of these was the presence of an Armenian monk who is said to have settled in one of the Coptic monasteries of Wadi al-Natrun. Another was the visit of the Armenian Patriarch Gregory II to Cairo where he met with the Coptic patriarch. The two patriarchs exchanged formulas of common faith, which meant that the two congregations recognized their common creed. In 1088, the Armenian patriarch officially consecrated an Armenian Church in Egypt.[68] At the same time, an Armenian monastery was established in Wadi al-Natrun at al-Buhayra. This monastery continued to function until the fourteenth century.[69]

In contrast to the dearth of archival sources, the Armenian community that lived in Egypt between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries has left us remarkable artifacts in the form of religious works of art. The recently excavated paintings at Dayr al-Suryan in Wadi al-Natrun include an icon of the famous Armenian saint, George the Illuminator.[70] Elsewhere, at al-Dayr al-Abyad in Suhag in Upper Egypt, we have wall-paintings by an Armenian painter and adorned with Armenian script

dating back to 1124–25.[71] Sources also refer to the *wazir* Taj al-Dawla Buhram al-Armani who joined the monastery in 1137.[72] The Coptic *Synaxarium* includes the hagiography of the martyred Armenian saint Maria al-Armaniya who lived in Egypt in the thirteenth century.[73]

Close relations between Copts and Armenians also go back to earlier periods. Thus, during the time of Patriarch Yua'nnas XIII (1494–1524), the corpse of St. Mercurius was moved to his church at Darb al-Bahr in Old Cairo. A number of Armenian priests joined in this ritual and took part in the celebrations, just as if it had been their own saint, although he is a Coptic local saint, a clear indication of the degree of integration at the religious level.[74]

One significant factor in the relations between Copts and Armenians concerns the organization of non-Muslim communities that the Ottoman state set up. Under the Ottomans' millet system, the Armenians, Syrians, Jacobites, Copts, and Ethiopians were, in theory, under the authority of the Armenian patriarch in Istanbul, a clear indication of the status of this important personage and of the Armenian Church there. In fact, the authority that he is supposed to have had over the Coptic Church has been considered by a number of scholars to explain the presence of Armenian icons in Coptic churches, and of Armenian influence on Coptic art.[75] However, this hierarchical relationship between the leaders of the Armenian and Coptic churches was largely an administrative one that did not have much bearing on everyday life and practice. Copts continued to manage their affairs in the same ways they did during the Mamluk period. One cannot identify any particular local effects resulting from the supervision by the Armenian patriarch of Istanbul of church affairs. The appointment of Coptic patriarchs, for example, of which we have numerous records, remained a purely local affair. The candidate was confirmed by local authorities and there is no evidence that the matter was referred to Istanbul or the Armenian patriarch.[76] In practice, therefore, the impact of the Armenian patriarch on Coptic affairs was minimal or non-existent.

Nor does there seem to have been any religious hierarchy tying the Armenian Church in Egypt to that of Jerusalem. Prior to the Ottoman conquest of Bilad al-Sham (1516), the Armenian patriarch of Jerusalem managed the affairs of his church independently of the Armenian

patriarch of Cilicia, who was nominally the head of the Armenian Church.[77] In fact, in 1311, the Mamluk Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad ibn Qalawun granted the Armenian patriarch of Jerusalem, Sarkis (1281–1313), a decree permitting him to manage the affairs of his patriarchate independently of the patriarch of Cilicia. This continued until 1702, when the Armenian patriarch of Istanbul once more regained control over the patriarchate of Jerusalem.[78] We could find parallels between these and the Armenians of Egypt. So far no historical sources that survive locally, whether those of the Coptic patriarch or the Islamic court records, can confirm that the Armenians in Egypt were under the authority of the Armenian patriarchs of Istanbul or Jerusalem. On the contrary, it would seem that the affairs of the community were managed by a local leader (called a *wartabed*) and other priests. This *wartabed*, the head of the Armenian community in Egypt, had to be a monk; thus, he was sent from Jerusalem (the monastery of St. Jacob), and his appointment confirmed by the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem. This did not mean, however, that he was under the patriarch's jurisdiction.

By carefully going through Ottoman court records in Cairo and tracing references to Armenians, I was able to compile the following table of the names and dates of the leaders of the Armenian Church in Egypt. These records attest to the autonomy the Armenian community enjoyed vis-à-vis the influence of the patriarchate of Istanbul or indeed of the geographically closer patriarchate of Jerusalem.

Jaspar (1672)
Ya'qub wild Guirguis (1 Muharram 1191/9 February 1777)
Ya'qub (5 Muharram 1196/17 December 1781)
Khashdur wild Garawana (30 Ramadan 1200/27 July 1786)
Guirguis wild Tadrus (1 Rabi I 1205/7 December 1790)
Artin (16 Safar 1215/9 July 1800)

All of these men, leaders of the Armenian community in Egypt, according to Egyptian court records, were local residents; there is no mention that the leader or the head of the church was simultaneously patriarch of Istanbul or Jerusalem. The available data therefore indicate that there was considerable autonomy vis-à-vis other Armenian churches.

The autonomous position in which the Armenian Church in Egypt found itself was both an advantage, since its leaders could act free of intervention, and a disadvantage. Because they had little direct connections with the Armenian Church in the center, in Istanbul, the Armenians of Egypt were not in a position to benefit from the wide influence that the Armenian patriarch of Istanbul and the Armenian community in the capital enjoyed. We do not have evidence that they used the influence of their contacts in Istanbul to obtain permission to establish new churches in Egypt, since in fact, the Armenians of Egypt continued to conduct their prayers at the Coptic church at Harat Zuwayla, which they shared with Copts. So despite its considerable autonomy, especially in church affairs, the Armenian community of Egypt seems to have been limited in numbers. The absence of specifically Armenian churches in Egypt during the Middle Ages is one indicator of the modest size of the community.

No medieval Armenian churches survive in Egypt, and none is referred to in literary historical sources. What do survive are references to Armenians in court records and *awqaf* documents, which offer further insight into how the community managed its affairs. A consideration of these deeds is a way of seeing how Armenians themselves viewed these issues from their point of view rather than just seeing matters from the top down.

Armenians who wished to establish pious foundations would be expected to name their churches and monasteries as primary or secondary beneficiaries of these foundations, just as Muslims and Copts usually did. Interestingly, however, Armenian *waqf* documents that are housed at the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate in Cairo, as well as those recorded in shari'a court registers and currently housed at the National Archives of Egypt, all indicate that Armenians who founded *awqaf* chose as beneficiary of its revenues either Dayr Mar Ya'qub in Jerusalem or else one of the Coptic churches or monasteries.

The oldest Armenian *waqf* deed I was able to identify dates back to 14 Muharram 888/22 February 1483. In it, Musa ibn 'Issa ibn Yunus al-Armani, known as Ibn al-Turjuman, established as *waqf* a *makan*, or place, at Khatt Qantarat Sunqur. Half the proceeds were designated to the poor among the Armenians at Dayr Jarkis in Jerusalem, and the other half was designated first to his wife and daughter and then, after their

death, to the Armenian poor at Dayr Jarkis in Jerusalem, and the Syrian Christians and Jacobite Christians in Jerusalem. Despite the founder's original deed, after thirty years the *waqf* was redirected to Coptic monasteries at Wadi al-Natrun after the founder's Armenian daughter had married an Egyptian Copt.[79] Another *waqf*, dating from the sixteenth century, founded by Satita daughter of Ibrahim son of Guirguis, the Armenian Christian, established two estates *(makan)* in Khatt Qantarat Sunqur in Cairo for the benefit of Dayr Anba Antonios on the Red Sea, Dayr al-Suryan in Wadi al-Natrun, and Dayr Mar Mina in Old Cairo.[80] The allocation of benefits in these *waqf* could be understood as a sign of the loyalty of the founder to these institutions.

These examples are by no means unique. In fact many pious foundations established by members of the Armenian community of Egypt were dedicated to Dayr Mar Ya'qub in Jerusalem. Among the Armenians who established *awqaf* in support of this monastery are the Mu'allim Yusuf son of Nagbukhaz al-Nusrani al-Armani al-Khayyat (the Tailor) of Khatt Khan al-Khalili (1688),[81] Gilsanan daughter of *al-dhimmi* (the non-Muslim) Maria al-Nusrani al-Armani (1729),[82] Mirza al-Qasabji son of *al-dhimmi* Shukri al-Nusrani (1743),[83] and *al-dhimmi* 'Issa al-Armani son of *al-dhimmi* Tadrus (1756).[84]

Thus, all references to *awqaf* established by Armenians show them to have been dedicated to monasteries in Jerusalem or to Coptic churches and monasteries in Egypt. This confirms that the Armenian community in Egypt did not establish any churches or monasteries of their own, otherwise they would have directed their *awqaf* to their communal institutions.

The close links between Coptic and Armenian churches can be seen at another level. In 1672, Coptic Patriarch Mita'us IV and the leader of the Armenians in Egypt, Jaspar, wrote a joint letter to the French consul in Cairo in answer to a request by the French ambassador to the Sublime Porte. In this letter, they explained the common faith of Copts and Armenians. This document, which still survives, is divided into two parts: the top half in Arabic and signed by the Coptic patriarch and the bottom half in Armenian, signed by the leader of the Armenians. In that document, the leader of the Armenians of Egypt did not refer to himself as a bishop or a patriarch, but rather *al-ra'is* (the chief).[85] This document explains some of the religious beliefs held in common between the

two communities. It also confirms what was suggested above, notably that the local Armenian community in Egypt had its own leader, independently of the patriarchates in Jerusalem or Istanbul. One could perceive this document as being an act by the leader of the Armenians in Egypt challenging the authority of the Armenian patriarch of Jerusalem, Eghyazar of Ayntab (1649, 1666–68, 1670–77). A document of shared faith is an especially sensitive matter and it would normally require to be referred to the highest religious authorities. The fact that it is Jaspar himself, and not one of the patriarchs, who signed that document, is an indication of the way the relationship to the religious hierarchy of Jerusalem was perceived.

One single reference to a 'patriarch' for the Armenians of Egypt can be found in a document dating back to 1688. The *mu'allim* Ibrahim son of Niqola al-Nusrani al-Armani al-Sayigh is referred to as the agent of the "Patriarch Yahya al-Nusrani al-Armani, the overseer of the endowments of the Mar Ya'qub monastery in Jerusalem." The document, dated 12 Sha'ban 1099/12 June 1688, states that this person had been the agent of the patriarch since 10 Dhu-l Qa'ida 1093/21 November 1681.[86] This might suggest that there was a patriarch at least between 1681 and 1688. This 'Yahya' could not be identified among the Armenian patriarchs of Jerusalem during the period 1676 to 1690. The known Armenian patriarchs of Jerusalem are: Mardiros Khrimtzi 1681–83; Lay Locum Tenens 1683–84; Hovhannes Bolsetzi 1684–97; Simeon 1688–91; and Minas Hamtezi 1697–1704.

The name Yahya is often used as an Arabization of Yuhanna. Even if Hovhannes were translated as Yahya, the patriarch with that name was not seated in 1681. Similarly, none of the contemporary patriarchs of Istanbul was a Yuhanna or Yahya. It therefore seems likely that this Yahya, referred to as being Armenian patriarch, was in fact the leader of the Armenians in Egypt but was called patriarch by the local court clerk who by mistake applied a title he was familiar with when referring to the heads of other Christian communities. It is fairly common to find in these court records some confusion in the terminology of Christian institutions or hierarchies. For instance, churches are often confused with monasteries and bishops often confused with patriarchs in shari'a court records.

We have a number of indications that suggest that Armenian presence in Egypt during the Ottoman period was not as strong as it had been in previous eras. In 1670, the Armenians living in Cairo numbered around six hundred to seven hundred families, while by the end of the eighteenth century the scholars on the French Expedition estimated the Armenians to be two thousand individuals.[87] André Raymond, who studied the craftsmen and tradesmen of Ottoman Cairo, comments that the limited role Armenians played in international trade does not match the important roles Armenians played elsewhere in the empire. Anthoine Morison, who visited Cairo in 1697, also commented that Armenians in Cairo were few in number and that their bishop—and other churchmen—were poor and modest. He compared the relationship of the Armenian bishop to the Armenians to that of the French consul to the Frenchmen in Cairo.[88] Bearing in mind the small number of Frenchman in Cairo at the time, the comparison is indicative. Another traveler who had visited Egypt earlier in the seventeenth century, George Sandys, listed the various non-Muslim communities living in Cairo. When he came to the Armenians, he mentioned that they were the poorest and the most honest and that they worked hard and barely made ends meet.[89]

Armenians constituted bigger and more prominent communities in other parts of the Ottoman Empire. The secretary to the French ambassador to Istanbul mentioned that around eight thousand Armenian families lived in Istanbul in 1673.[90] Many of these were persons of wealth and status. Similarly, a large, strong, and organized Armenian community lived in Aleppo during the Ottoman period and enjoyed considerable wealth and power.[91] Even though the Armenian communities of various Ottoman provinces played important roles in international trade, the Armenians of Egypt were not involved in commerce, except in a limited role as agents or as traders for Western merchants. Most of the members of the community earned their living as jewelers, watchmakers, and tailors.[92]

Thus, the impression we get of the Armenian community of Egypt during the Mamluk and Ottoman period is that it was a small one of modest means. It lacked a wealthy elite with good ties to the ruling class, an elite that would have looked after the interests of the community and

that could have patronized such services as an independent church. This is in contrast to the rise of individuals of different non-Muslim communities in other provinces of the Ottoman Empire during the eighteenth century, individuals who were able to use their newly acquired wealth and status for the benefit of their communities, such as the lay notables of the Coptic community and the Armenian notables of Istanbul and Aleppo.[93]

Thus, these complex conditions were probably behind the relationships that Armenians in Egypt made locally. Because they were modest in their social status and did not enjoy the special relations with the ruling class that Armenians had elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire, they were more likely to be influenced by the local culture and traditions of the society they lived in. In fact, this is what we find in Egypt and what can explain the special Armenian-Coptic relationships, where Armenians were particularly influenced by Coptic culture.

The interaction and integration between Armenians and Copts was significant and occurred at various levels. On the theological and church level we have seen how the two congregations shared places of worship so that Copts allowed Armenians to pray at the Harat Zuwayla Church.[94] Historic documents indicate that the leader *(wartabed)* of the Armenian community oversaw the affairs of this church. For *al-mu'allim* Ya'qub al-Nusrani al-Rumi al-Sa'ati (the Watchmaker), the leader of the Armenians is referred to as the overseer *(mutassarif)* of the church of Harat Zuwayla in Cairo in a document referring to an *istibdal* (replacing one estate endowed to the benefit of the *waqf* with another) relating to a *waqf* dedicated to the aforementioned church.[95] The Armenian use of the Harat Zuwayla Church was therefore established and recognized.

The medieval Egyptian historian al-Maqrizi (d. 1442) mentions that the church of Bu Mina (the monastery of Mar Mina at Fumm al-Khalij in Old Cairo) was originally composed of three adjacent churches: one for Jacobites, one for Syrians, and one for Armenians.[96] Thus, Copts had allowed other communities, including Syrian Christians and Armenians, to use their churches for prayer. In fact, what al-Maqrizi was referring to were three altars and not three separate buildings. However, these fell into disuse afterward. European travelers who visited Egypt in the late Ottoman period, such as Niebuhr and Jomard, mention an Armenian church close to Harat al-Nasara next to al-Qantara

al-Jadida (French Expedition Map G8 257).[97] Furthermore, a letter from the Coptic patriarch Butrus al-Jawli (1809–52) to the Armenian patriarch of Jerusalem at Dayr Mar Ya'qub, Anba Tidros, sets out the cooperation and support that Copts showed Armenians after that monastery was ruined in a fire.[98]

Given the general context of the two communities, we can now turn to the individual level to see the impact of these general conditions on particular persons. Socially speaking, the biography of our protagonist Yuhanna al-Armani offers clear evidence of the interaction and integration between Copts and Armenians. The social network woven by Yuhanna's family in Cairo and his two marriages to Coptic women (as will be discussed below) show how well integrated relationships and traditions between both communities were. This also indicates that Yuhanna's family had settled in Egypt a while before his name rose in church circles. The same also applies to his brother and sister (see Chapter 5).

Armenians did not only share churches and social relationships with Copts; they also participated in their spaces and their customs and traditions. In eighteenth-century Cairo, the residential districts or *hara*s tended to group together persons of the same profession, religion, or ethnic background; thus Copts lived in Harat al-Nasara and Europeans in Harat al-Ifranj. Armenians, perhaps because they were not very numerous, seem to have, at least some of them, lived in the districts occupied by Copts, and were, as a result, in continuous close physical proximity to them. Moreover, historical sources indicate that the Armenians of Egypt practiced customs and traditions that have ancient Egyptian roots and which had been associated with Copts in particular as distinct from other Christian sects. These include funerary rites and traditions; for example, Copts usually exaggerated the rituals celebrating the deceased, with special rites performed on the third, fifteenth, and fortieth days after the death. They also visited the tombs of their deceased loved ones and relatives on various feast days such as Christmas and Easter. Priests would burn incense and perform special prayers at each grave. Naturally, the family of the deceased compensated the priest for such services. Armenians were so well integrated with Egyptian Copts that they emulated these traditions. Hence the expenses for such funerary rites were deducted from the legacies of

deceased Armenians just as happened with Copts.[99] Inheritance records registered in shari'a courts show that Armenians also practiced the same traditions; these documents often included entries for shroud, burial, visitations, priest, and so on under their 'expenses' category.[100]

The inheritance record of Yuhanna al-Armani himself includes among the various expenses: "what was spent to prepare and shroud the deceased and bury him and conduct services on the third [day after his death] and the fortieth [day after his death] etc. . . . fifty one *riyal*s and twenty-five *nisf fadda*s, and what was paid for the priest, the *wartabed* and the other churchmen: ten *riyal*s."[101]

There is of course another side to the picture. The evidence provided above should not lead us to suppose that the community's traditions or ethnic identity were entirely absorbed by their surroundings. On a number of important matters, Armenians retained their own traditions and culture. One thing that distinguished Armenians was their preservation of Armenian as a language of communication among themselves as well as a liturgical language. In fact, unlike a number of other churches, the Armenian Church still does not use an Arabic liturgy to this day. Armenians were quite keen on preserving their language as a marker of identity. The letter regarding the description of its creed sent to the French consul in 1762 upon the latter's request, was written in Armenian.[102] Armenian was not only a spoken language within the community but probably also used for writing as well. Although one cannot point to surviving documents in Armenian written at this time, we know that they existed from references to them elsewhere. For example, a contract registered in the court of al-Bab al-'Ali in 1789, in which an Armenian was involved, mentions that the evidence of the seller's ownership of this property was a deed written in Armenian.[103] Yuhanna, too, made use of the Armenian script in his icons. For example, on the icons *St. Mar Guirguis Destroying Idols* and the *Martyrdom of St. Mar Guirguis* at the Hanging Church (al-Mu'allaqa), he recorded the dates in Armenian script.[104]

In conclusion, one of the ways in which we can understand how the context had an impact on Yuhanna's work is to consider it neither as being entirely in the Coptic tradition nor as entirely a result of his being Armenian, because neither of these interpretations can provide us with

a fair picture of the complexity that was contained in his work. Rather, it would be more appropriate to appreciate this artistic production as a manifestation of this rich and complex relationship. Armenians in Egypt were well integrated with the local religious and social contexts they lived in, and they followed the local customs and traditions that Copts and Egyptians in general followed. To this, they added their own visions and experiences. Yuhanna's icons can best be understood in this vein.

For, while icon-painting and veneration of icons were not historically associated with Armenian churches, it has for centuries been an important part of Coptic Christianity. Copts continued to paint and venerate icons without any interruptions or theological qualms. Unlike Christians in other parts of the world, the Coptic Church did not pass through an iconoclastic controversy. Armenians, on the other hand, were not known to paint or venerate icons.

Furthermore, all of Yuhanna al-Armani's surviving and known icons were commissioned for Coptic churches. As an Armenian, Yuhanna had no trouble entering and working in the Coptic churches in Cairo, whereas he is not known to have painted icons for Armenian congregations. His icons were a manifestation of a purely local phenomenon, and were related to indigenous traditions that began in the mid-seventeenth century—in other words, probably before Yuhanna's family settled in Egypt—and continued throughout the eighteenth century, namely, the renaissance that the Coptic community was enjoying and the renewed church-building activity that went with it.

5

A Biographical Sketch of Yuhanna al-Armani

When sources and information about a particular social group are scant, historians may resort to studying a particular individual from this community; the biography of a person may be a channel through which better to understand the larger group as a whole. Studying Yuhanna al-Armani's biography is undertaken along these lines, with the hope of throwing light upon different aspects of eighteenth-century Egypt. In a sense, Yuhanna was an ordinary person who through his work had achieved a certain status. He never attained great wealth, but seems to have lived in relative comfort, like many other craftsmen (for painting was considered a craft), whether they were living in Cairo or another Ottoman city. His career sheds light on the ways in which artists functioned and carried out their work and gives us an idea of their social status. It also shows us how the artistic economy of production in general could function. Through Yuhanna, we can aim to see the type of social ties that bound various religious and ethnic communities within the Ottoman Empire to each other.

Yuhanna al-Armani left nothing behind save his icons. He did not leave any private papers about himself or his family or the circumstances in which he produced his artwork. In the absence of such papers, the registers of the shari'a courts—with their rich details of the everyday lives of

common people—are crucial. Common people, unconnected to the elite and ruling regime, are rarely mentioned in traditional historical sources, yet they appear in court registers for many different reasons, making these records extremely useful for the study of ordinary individuals.

Using shari'a court records, especially probate records and contracts, I was able to reconstruct a number of aspects of Yuhanna's biography including the main stages of his career. The documents relating to *awqaf* dedicated to churches and monasteries, as well as documents pertaining to the building and restoration of churches, also allow us to understand the social and economic contexts in which Yuhanna worked and lived.

I do not claim to be able to offer a full biography of Yuhanna al-Armani here. Instead, what I have attempted is to piece together the various parts of the jigsaw puzzle that are available in surviving documents in the Coptic Patriarchate and the court registers and to combine our data in the archives with the data that the extant icons provide, in order to reconstruct parts of his experiences and life. The aim was not so much to write a biography of Yuhanna as such, as to place him within a historical and social context, to be able to understand the identity and nature of his artistic production and style. It might not be entirely relevant to this undertaking to present details about his family and social networks. However, I opt to put them before the reader in the hope that such details will bring Yuhanna back to life to some extent and—more importantly—might be of use to other scholars in future research.

Yuhanna's Family

Surviving historical documents reveal that Yuhanna al-Armani's family settled in Egypt at the end of the seventeenth or the beginning of the eighteenth century. It seems that the first member of the family to settle in Egypt was Yuhanna's own father, Artin Karabid, who came to Egypt with his two sons, Yuhanna and his brother Salib (Salib is sometimes referred to in the sources as Khashtadur).

Yuhanna's first marriage was to Farisiniya, daughter of Tadrus Mikha'il al-Nusrani al-Ya'qubi (the Jacobite Christian) al-Tukhi (of Tukh) al-Khayyat (the Tailor), the child of a Coptic father and an Armenian mother. They had four children: three boys (Artin, Guirguis, and Ya'qub) and one girl (Minkasha). Farisiniya died on 9 Jumada al-Ula

1184/30 August 1770. At the time of her death, all their children had reached legal majority.[105] If we assume that the youngest of the children must have been at least eighteen years old at the time, in 1770, then this would suggest that the marriage had taken place at least twenty-five years before, that is around the year 1745. Yuhanna remarried after Farisiniya's death, again to a Coptic woman: Dimyana, daughter of *al-dhimmi* Guirguis 'Anbar al-Sayigh (the Jeweler) al-Nusrani al-Qibti (the Coptic Christian).[106] They had no children.

Yuhanna's eldest son, Artin, was a jeweler at the Dar al-Darbkhana, the mint. Artin married an Armenian woman: Madlina, daughter of *al-dhimmi* Jarquz al-'Ayntabli (of 'Ayntab) al-Nusrani al-Armani (the Armenian Christian). They had three daughters: Warda, Latifa, and Mariam. The three girls were still teenagers in 1775.[107]

Artin ibn Yuhanna al-Armani emerges in the archives as an important—and wealthy—personality in the Armenian community of the time. He lived in a large house at Khatt al-Shaykh al-Ramli, which lies between Qantarat al-Ramli and Maydan al-Ghalla. It was close to both Harat al-Ifranj and Harat al-Nasara. Artin owned half the house himself and rented the other half from an Armenian *waqf* endowed to the benefit of the monastery of Mar Ya'qub in Jerusalem. He rebuilt the house and renovated it to make it larger and more luxurious and increased the sum of rent paid to the *waqf*.[108] Artin's residence was close to his father's; both houses were close to Harat al-Shaykh al-Ramli in Muski.

Artin's wealth was manifested in property he owned other than his residence. He was a partner with another famous Armenian of the time, Mu'allim 'Ashiq Silan, in the joint ownership of a large house in which 'Ashiq had a share of thirteen *qirat*s, while Artin owned ten *qirat*s. They eventually jointly sold their share for a sum of five hundred *riyal*s, a large amount by the standards of the time.[109] It indicates how grand the house was and confirms Artin's wealth.

As for Yuhanna's second son, Guirguis, he worked as a *naqqash* (painter) like his father.[110] However, we had no information that could help us to determine that father and son worked together. It is possible that they did, but did not sign any work jointly. In fact many artists never signed their name on their work. His name crops up often with those of his father and eldest brother, Artin, in family transactions. Yet, in contrast to Artin,

we know far less about Guirguis's work, his marriage, or his family. In one recorded contract we learn that he bought, in partnership with his brother Artin, a share of fourteen *qirat*s in a *makan* (house) at the Jinaynat Sawdun in Khatt al-Shaykh al-Ramli, the neighborhood where Artin lived. The deal was a family affair, for the seller was their Coptic maternal aunt, Tuhfa, daughter of Tadrus ibn Mikha'il al-Nusrani al-Ya'qubi al-Tukhi al-Khayyat.[111]

Yuhanna al-Armani's third son, Ya'qub, seems to have died young, though after the death of his mother in 1770. His name never appears in any of the family documents nor does it appear among the heirs listed at Yuhanna's death in 1786. Thus, there is no information available about him. Nor is there much we know about Yuhanna's only daughter, Minkasha: we only know that she was still alive at the time of her father's death. Youth mortality, whether due to repeated epidemics or for other causes, was commonplace. It is therefore not surprising that many parents outlived their children.

The other branch of Yuhanna's family is that of his brother, Salib/Khashtadur. It is in fact Salib's children, Guirguis and Sima, who appear more often in court documents, rather than their father. It would appear that Salib himself died early, at least before 1750.

Sima, Yuhanna's niece, at first married an Armenian, Yusuf Karkur, whose family had settled in Egypt long before.[112] Sima's husband died in 1180/1766, after they had had three children: Antony, who had reached maturity at the time, and Ya'qub and Hanna, both still teenagers at their father's death.[113] Hanna's name appears on one of Yuhanna al-Armani's icons, at the Hanging Church of the Virgin.[114] Karkur's death in 1766 and the ages of their children as mentioned in the inheritance records suggest that he and Sima had married at least eighteen years earlier, that is before 1748. After Karkur's death, Sima married Mu'allim Dawud al-Khardaji, the son of Mirza, the son of Kuzbur al-Armani al-Kharbatli.[115] Remarriage was a very common occurrence as the court records abundantly show, whether it followed the death of a spouse, as in the case of Sima, or a divorce. Interestingly, Yuhanna al-Armani appears to have taken part in all his niece's dealings at the shari'a courts.

Yuhanna's nephew, Guirguis ibn Salib, lived in Egypt. His name appears in many of the legal dealings of his sister, Sima, and his second

brother-in-law Mu'allim Dawud Mirza.[116] Yet it is not clear what Guirguis's occupation was. Since his name appeared on one of Yuhanna al-Armani's icons as having taken part in painting it, it is likely that he worked with his uncle in icon-painting.[117]

By examining the dates of Yuhanna's marriages, the marriages of his niece, and the dates showing the rise of his son Artin to a position of influence within the community, one could suggest that Yuhanna's first marriage occurred around the years 1740–42. Thus, it is probable that he had settled in Egypt a considerable time before that. His niece's early marriage to a man from a rich Armenian family, long resident in Egypt, also suggests that her own father had settled in Egypt some time before the marriage, long enough to have made sufficient social contacts with resident Armenians to intermarry with their families. It is highly probable that Artin Karabid—Yuhanna al-Armani's father—moved from Jerusalem to Cairo, with his family, some time between the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Yuhanna's Social Networks

Yuhanna's family managed to create a wide social network in Cairo. It connected Coptic and Armenian families through intermarriage. It is clear that Yuhanna's network also tied him to the richest and most influential members of the Armenian community in Egypt. Significantly, Yuhanna and his eldest son, Artin, were themselves among the wealthier strata of the Armenian community; they each lived comfortably in big houses. Yuhanna was sufficiently well-off to employ servants at his residence.[118]

Yuhanna also enjoyed good relationships with a number of important personalities in the community such as Mu'allim 'Azar ibn Bulus, the jeweler at Wikalat Aqash al-Sughra, and Mu'allim 'Ashiq Silan ibn Guirguis. Both these men make multiple appearances in transactions relating to Yuhanna and his family recorded in court registers. They also appear to have been important personalities in the Armenian community of their time. Mu'allim 'Azar was married to Yuhanna's Coptic sister-in-law, Tuhfa, the daughter of *al-dhimmi* Tadrus ibn Mikha'il al-Nusrani al-Ya'qubi al-Tukhi al-Khayyat.[119] 'Azar's daughter, Sophia, was married to the Copt Mu'allim Jubran, the merchant at Wikalat al-Jawali, son of *al-dhimmi* Yustus al-Nusrani al-Ya'qubi.[120]

Similarly, Mu'allim Dawud al-Khardaji—the husband of Sima, Yuhanna's niece—was one of the important individuals in the Armenian community whose name appears in many of the contracts and probate records of the community registered at the shari'a courts. He first appears in the court archives in the year 1166/1753.[121] He was also the superintendent of the *awqaf* of the Armenian monastery of Mar Ya'qub in Jerusalem.[122]

Yuhanna's own marriages to two Coptic women, and the other Armenian-Coptic marriages in his family, which attest to his family's integration with the Egyptian Coptic community, were one of several other alliances between the members of the two communities. Mu'allim Nasim al-Sayigh, son of Hanna al-Nusrani al-Ya'qubi, was also very close to the family by virtue of his marriage to the Armenian Zarifa bint Guirguis al-Nusrani al-Armani, who was herself related to Sima bint Salib al-Armani's in-laws.[123]

The icons that Yuhanna painted themselves throw light on his relationships with many of the leading Coptic archons of his time, such as Mu'allim Ibrahim Jawhari, and his brother Guirguis Jawhari and Mu'allim 'Abid Khuzam al-Bayadi and others. These men had financed considerable repairs to and reconstruction of religious buildings. His work also shows that he was used to attending and visiting Coptic churches regularly, perhaps because of his marriage to a Copt, but also because as an artist he produced works for these churches.

Yuhanna's Artistic Career

So far, scholars have not given sufficient attention to the arts of the Ottoman period, with the notable exception of court arts, which have been the focus of numerous studies, as has the architectural heritage of the sultans and the ruling class, and institutions of state and palaces of the elite. As for studies about artists and craftsmen who produced artworks outside Ottoman courts, few historians have entered the field. The most notable exception is André Raymond's seminal work on Cairo's eighteenth-century artisans and craftsmen. However, Raymond's book provided little information on craftsmen who were involved in artistic production such as the *musawwirun*, *rassamun*, or *naqqashun*, the craftsmen and artists in the painting and decoration trades, possibly

because, compared to textile-workers or woodworkers, their number was relatively small and they did not have much weight in the economy. It therefore remains a difficult task to discuss Yuhanna in the context of other craftsmen in his profession, or to find out much about his formal training, or indeed that of any of his peers and colleagues. I have tried to shed light on this matter by closely examining shari'a court archives in the hope of finding out more about these artisans and craftsmen.

As mentioned earlier, Yuhanna was either brought up in Egypt, or emigrated to Egypt some time before 1740, the date of his first marriage. Since we know that his earliest identified icon dates back to 1742, we can presume that before he married and started a family, Yuhanna had already had some income-generating work. Little is known of the nature of Yuhanna's early career and training, or what craft he specialized in before gaining fame as an icon-painter. One reason why his early life is somewhat hazy is that the documents we have of him date from his later years, as would be expected, that is when he was mature enough to make transactions, get married, and so on. Moreover, references to him in court documents identify him in a number of different ways. Likewise, his signatures on the icons that he painted are not always with the identical name. Thus, we have variations of his name and identity in both his work and in deeds that mention him.

This is especially confusing when the references are to his profession. In many documents Yuhanna is referred to as 'al-Naqqash.'[124] Later on, the documents refer to him as *al-rassam*, a name that remains with him. Only once did Yuhanna refer to himself as 'al-Musawwir,' a profession by which the icon-painters were known. This can be found at the niche in the east wall of the sanctuary of the church of Mar Guirguis at the monastery of Mar Mina in Old Cairo, where he inscribed: "This is the work of the humble Hanna al-Armani al-Qudsi al-Musawwir in the year 1186."[125]

Thus, three terms were used to identify his profession: *naqqash*, *rassam*, and *musawwir*. The three refer to interrelated but distinct artistic crafts practiced in Ottoman Egypt. It is my view that Yuhanna had multiple craft skills and that he progressed from one to the other. It would appear that he started out as a *naqqash* and subsequently became a *rassam*. Both these crafts belonged to the same guild, the guild of the *naqqashun*.

In Cairo, as in other cities—Istanbul, Damascus, Jerusalem, Aleppo, and many others—craftsmen and tradesmen belonged to professional guilds that were headed by a *shaykh*, responsible to the state for tax collection from his guild members, and responsible to the guild for solving disputes and other matters of concern to them.

In the absence of sources that specifically detail the laws or regulations of guilds whose members were involved in artistic production, court documents fill some of the gaps in our understanding. These documents shed some light on the guild of the *naqqashun* and *rassamun*, and on this basis, we can observe certain aspects in the development of Yuhanna's career and in the professional contexts in which he trained and worked. They show, for instance, that both *al-rassam* and *al-naqqash* were used to denote illustrating and painting. A *naqqash* was a craftsman who decorated houses and palaces. It also emerges that the *naqqashun*, as well as the *dahhanun*, formed an independent guild as they became increasingly specialized, whereas they had earlier been attached to *mi'marbashi* of Egypt, the official in charge of the supervision of, and tax collection from crafts linked to construction and buildings. Thus, documents refer to the amir Ahmad ibn Mustafa Çelebi as the *shaykh* and holder of the tax concession for all the *naqqashun* and *dahannun* of Egypt, Arabia, Persia, and Turkey. The duties of some members of the guilds are specified in the documents. Thus, for example, one such seventeenth-century document, dated from 1034/1625, informs us that a *naqqash* could also practice the craft of decorating textiles and pots.[126] Unlike the current use of the term, the *naqqashun* of the eighteenth century did not paint the facades or walls of buildings. For this job, we have another guild, the *mubayyiddun fi-l-'aqarat*, who had their own *shaykh* or guild head, and their own specialized craftsmen such as al-Hajj Musa, identified as '*al-mubayyid fi-l-'aqarat*.'[127]

The *naqqashun*'s work was quite organized. In the event of a disagreement with one of the artists of the guild or when a commissioned work did not meet the standards of quality *dahannun* of the time, clients resorted to the *shaykh* of the guild. Thus, within the pages of the shari'a court records, we learn of the contract between a merchant and a *dahhan* to decorate the ceiling of a new mosque that the merchant had just built in Old Cairo. The contract specified that the decoration would be "in

color and with a set amount of script." The end work was not to the client's liking; he argued that it did not meet the standards of the trade. The *shaykh* and *naqib* of the *dahannun* were consulted; they inspected the work and identified the defects in it.[128]

The work of the *naqqashun* included a degree of variance and sub-specialization. Some specialized in working on houses, palaces, and religious buildings, decorating the walls, ceilings and woodwork. Others specialized in painting metalwork such as silver. The courts refer to a plaintiff as "Ishaq, *al-naqqash fi-l-fadda* [the painter on silver], son of *al-dhimmi* Badawi, *al-katib* [the Scribe]."[129]

The guild of the *naqqashun* included members from various ethnic and religious groups; however, the majority were Copts, possibly because a lot of the work was done in churches.[130] There were also Armenians in the guild such as *al-dhimmi* Yusuf al-Naqqash son of *al-dhimmi* Wannan al-Armani.[131] The guild also included many Muslim members. Many members of the guild, both Christians and Muslims, were *rassamun* and were referred to in official documents by the title *al-rassam*.[132] Thus, one and the same guild brought together the *rassam* and the *naqqash*.

Unfortunately, information about the tools that a *naqqash* and a *rassam* used in their trades is very scant. A brief reference by the great eighteenth-century scholar Murtada al-Zabidi, author of the voluminous encyclopedia, *Taj al-'arus*, states that the tools of a *naqqash* included wood and lead and other unspecified items. Al-Zabidi also mentions the compass as being one of the tools a *naqqash* used.[133] From a probate record registered when a *naqqash*, al-Sayyid al-Sharif Ismail al-Naqqash Muhammad, died, we find out that the value of his tools was of some 2200 *nisf fadda*. [134]

It seems that the crafts of *niqasha* and *rasm* were quite similar and not easily distinguishable. While the plurality of terms in use itself hints at a degree of specialization and sub-specialization within the field of interior decoration, at the same time, we can perceive a certain level of interchange between them. Notably, in reference to Yuhanna's career, he seems to have moved from one to the other. Moreover, the fact that both types of craftsmen belonged to the same guild suggests that the boundaries between these specializations were still relatively fluid.

How then does all this reflect upon the work of Yuhanna al-Armani? One can suggest a certain development in his career on the basis of these specializations. In fact, his earliest identified icon is dated 1742, a time when he was already a married man with a family in Egypt. Possibly, Yuhanna in fact did not begin his career directly by painting icons. He might very well have started off as a *naqqash*, decorating walls and painting frescoes and the like before moving to icon-painting later on in his career. Indeed, some of Yuhanna's later surviving works confirm that he did paint and decorate walls as well. For example, at the church of Mar Guirguis at the monastery of Mar Mina in Old Cairo, Yuhanna is identified as the artist who produced all the artwork for the altar. This demonstrates that his talents extended beyond icon-painting to include frescoes and wall decoration as well.

In the Egyptian Coptic context, painters who specialized in icons were referred to as *musawwirun*, and the painting of an icon was described as *taswir*.[135] Icon-painters who preceded Yuhanna were given that title; thus Suryal, son of the priest Abu al-Minna, was referred to as the Egyptian *musawwir* of icons, as was Mu'allim Mikha'il al-Musawwir son of Mu'allim Hanna al-Musawwir al-Shami.[136] The word *al-musawwir* was also applied to other artists working at the same time in other parts of the Ottoman Empire. In fact, the *musawwirun* were among the established craft guilds in Ottoman Cairo, recognized as such by the state.[137] In his description of various guilds, the Ottoman traveler Evliya Çelebi, who visited Egypt between 1672 and 1680, writes: "The *musawwirun*: they are twenty men. They do not have shops but they go to the places where people gather and they hang their works on the walls to show off a soulless beauty."[138] Çelebi's statement suggests that painting was not exclusive to the Coptic community and that buildings other than churches could be making use of them. Unfortunately, this is an aspect that we hardly know anything about since there are no known paintings of the period that survive save the icons found in churches.

And even though Evliya Çelebi was not impressed with the paintings of the Egyptian artists, he had better things to say about the *naqqashun*: "And then there are the *naqqashun*, and they do not have shops of their own. Instead they work in their own houses and in buildings under construction. They are seven hundred men, and among them are

artists who are comparable to Mani and Bihzad, the masters of the art in Iran. The masters of painting in other countries fail to achieve the same quality of their work."[139]

In the absence of more concrete evidence about the stages of development of Yuhanna's career, the use of this terminology may be of help for us to try and reconstruct parts of it. Thus, we can hypothesize that had Yuhanna started out his career exclusively as a painter of icons, he would have been called Yuhanna al-Armani al-Musawwir. That he was not and instead referred to himself in shari'a court records as a *naqqash* or *rassam* can therefore be taken as an indication that he began his career as a *naqqash* and did not specialize exclusively in icon-painting except at a later stage in his career.

If Yuhanna al-Armani had in fact arrived to Cairo from Jerusalem already an established icon-painter—as most studies suggest—then he would have more likely joined the guild of the *musawwirun* rather than the *naqqashun*. Guild rules were usually strict. One could only become a member after having demonstrated that one had achieved the necessary skills to practice the profession. A person could not simply choose the craft he wanted before having had the proper training; nor could he attach a skill to his name in official documents such as court records without actually practicing that profession. A man, in other words, could not just go to court and declare himself a *rassam* or a *musawwir* as he pleased, this being strictly regulated by traditions and regulations. Thus, Yuhanna would not have referred to himself as a *naqqash* or a *rassam* if he did not practice this trade.[140]

The ways in which people described themselves in court followed certain regulations; even though modern identity cards were not available, the naming of individuals largely depended on the information they supplied. Though sometimes court scribes added honorific titles to glorify particular individuals, the craft of the person had to be accurately included and confirmed by the court witnesses. This is clear through the various references to Yuhanna himself in shari'a court records. He is alternatively identified in these deeds in the following ways:

> *al-dhimmi* Hanna *al-rassam*, son of *al-dhimmi* Artin al-Armani[141]

al-dhimmi Yuhanna *al-naqqash*, son of *al-dhimmi* Artin al-Nusrani al-Armani[142]

al-dhimmi Yuhanna al-Qudsi *al-rassam*, son of *al-dhimmi* Artin[143]

al-dhimmi Hanna *al-rassam*, son of *al-dhimmi* Artin al-Nusrani al-Qudsi al-Armani[144]

al-dhimmi Hanna *al-rassam*, son of *al-dhimmi* Artin al-Nusrani al-Qudsi[145]

Hanna *al-rassam*, son of Artin, son of Karabid al-Qudsi al-Nusrani al-Armani.[146]

As Yuhanna al-Armani's craft is usually referred to as that of either a *rassam* or a *naqqash*, these two crafts can therefore be taken to be those that he actually practiced.

The identity that was provided in these various deeds of Yuhanna's ethnic and geographic origins also changed. Sometimes he was simply referred to as 'al-Armani,' the Armenian, other times he was only 'al-Qudsi,' the Jerusalemite. Sometimes the epithet 'al-Qudsi' was attached to his name, other times to his father's name. The one time when his full name was mentioned in a document was when he was on his deathbed and wanted his companions and family to bear witness to his properties and so he was described as: Hanna *al-rassam*, son of Artin, son of Karabid, al-Qudsi al-Nusrani al-Armani.

Yuhanna's brother also appears under different titles in shari'a court records. Sometimes he is referred to as Salib (meaning 'crucifix' in Arabic); thus Sima is the daughter of Salib al-Qudsi[147] and her brother is *al-dhimmi* Guirguis son of *al-dhimmi* Salib al-Nusrani al-Armani al-Qudsi.[148] At other times Salib is called Khashdur (meaning 'crucifix' in Armenian); thus Sima is the daughter of Khashdur al-Qudsi.[149] And despite the obvious difference between the names Salib and Khashdur, at least from the point of view of the Muslim shari'a court scribe, this was not a fundamental problem since the important thing was that the witnesses recognized the person and did not confuse him with another man with a similar name.

Yuhanna's own identification of himself, through his signatures on the icons he painted, is likewise subject to variations. He signed in two

different formulas: either as Hanna al-Armani or else Hanna al-Armani al-Qudsi or, sometimes, Hanna al-Qudsi al-Armani. Only once did he sign as Yuhanna Karabid al-Armani al-Qudsi.[150] Yuhanna used both formulations of his name simultaneously on some of his icons such as those at the Hanging Church of the Virgin in Old Cairo where on the same date, 1777, he puts both signatures: Hanna al-Armani and Hanna al-Armani al-Qudsi.

However, when Yuhanna's children went to court, they were identified as the children of Hanna al-Armani. In other words, the generation that followed Yuhanna had removed the geographic identification, al-Qudsi, from their names: for example, al-Mu'allim Artin, son of *al-dhimmi* Hanna *al-rassam* al-Nusrani al-Armani.[151] Another register mentions "both *al-dhimmi* Artin al-Sayigh [the jeweler] at the mint and his brother *al-dhimmi* Guirguis *al-naqqash*, sons of *al-dhimmi* Hanna *al-rassam* al-Nusrani al-Armani."[152] Thus, it would appear that the title al-Qudsi referred mainly to Yuhanna's father or grandfather and that he himself used it occasionally but that his children after him abandoned it.

The use of the title 'al-Qudsi,' the Jerusalemite, could mean several things. It could denote the geographic origin of a person. It was also often used to confer a degree of social prestige on an individual. Thus, Copts who made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, or who were used to visiting the city every year, usually took the title al-Qudsi, a custom that is very apparent in the deeds of the period. While court scribes used various honorific titles when they referred to the members of the Coptic civilian elite when they appeared in their registers, the title al-Qudsi was attached to only a few of those individuals. Thus, even an individual such as the famous bureaucrat and financial administrator Mu'allim Rizq is only mentioned as Mu'allim Rizq son of Mu'allim 'Atallah al-Nusrani al-Ya'qubi *al-mubashir*.[153] On the other hand, in referring to Mu'allim Nawruz Nawwar, who was famous for arranging a significant pilgrimage caravan to Jerusalem, the title al-Qudsi was attached to his name.[154]

There are many similar examples in the archives so that it is not always easy to discern what the individual's relationship to Jerusalem was. One of Yuhanna's close associates, Mu'allim 'Azar son of Bulus al-Armani, who appears in most documents as al-Nusrani al-Armani only, is referred to in one document only as Mu'allim 'Azar, son of *al-dhimmi*

Bulus al-Qudsi. (In that same document, Yuhanna al-Armani is referred to *al-dhimmi* Hanna *al-rassam*, son of *al-dhimmi* Artin al-Armani.)[155]

These varying—somewhat confusing—examples all suggest that the title al-Qudsi did not necessarily denote that a person was born and had lived in Jerusalem; it was sometimes a family title that some individuals took and others abandoned; it could refer to the birthplace and geographic origins of an individual or his progenitors. Others took the title al-Qudsi because of its religious and spiritual symbolism and the social prestige it bestowed on the individual.

What about Yuhanna then? Based on the confusing evidence that survives, it is clear that Yuhanna's family had indeed originated from Jerusalem. Yet the family's relationship with the city seems to have ended before Yuhanna's generation or at the very latest during his adolescence. While Yuhanna might have been born in Jerusalem, his relationship to that city does not seem to have been at the core of his identity so that he often dropped the epithet al-Qudsi from his name.

Yuhanna's Relationship with Ibrahim al-Nasikh

Ibrahim al-Nasikh was an important figure in the life of Yuhanna al-Armani, and the study of the relationship of these two men provides us with an additional dimension to the period and its cultural production.

Ibrahim al-Nasikh, the scribe and calligraphist, is a well-known Egyptian artist whose earliest known work dates back to 1732 or slightly before. He died in June 1785, leaving behind a large number of icons and manuscripts all over Egypt's churches and monasteries. [156] Not only were Ibrahim, who was a Copt, and Yuhanna practicing the same trades, but they were also colleagues and associates. Their names became connected as they worked on many pieces together during the period 1742–55.

So far, historians have not established any familial or marital connections between the two men and their families. They were not even neighbors; for a while Yuhanna al-Armani lived in al-Muski, in the northern part of the city, Ibrahim al-Nasikh lived in Harat al-Rum in the southern part of the city. However, Ibrahim had many contacts with Armenians, some of whom were his friends and others, business contacts. These friends included Hanna Harut al-Armani[157] and Guirguis

Tuma al-Armani al-Makhishati.[158] These friendships between Copts and Armenians show another dimension of Coptic-Armenian relations.

Ibrahim al-Nasikh was well known as an artist in Coptic circles before Yuhanna al-Armani appeared on the scene. Mu'allim Guirguis Yusuf al-Suruji, a notable Copt of the time, arranged to inaugurate and bless the church of the Archangel Michael and John the Baptist at the monastery of Bula (St. Paul) on the Red Sea. Ibrahim al-Nasikh himself described the details of the journey in a manuscript which this monastery still preserves.[159] In the year 1740, he appeared in court in the guise of a person with a direct relationship to the Coptic patriarch.[160] Thus, years before Yuhanna al-Armani appeared on the scene, Ibrahim, probably his senior in age, was already visible. What brought together the two men was their professional work.

Ibrahim al-Nasikh was involved in more than one profession at the same time. He painted icons and walls, decorated church domes,[161] and oversaw the decoration of the fashionable houses of high-ranking bureaucrats.[162] He also copied and illuminated manuscripts. Interestingly enough, he also practiced another profession which was somewhat unrelated to his artistic production: he was a primary school teacher, teaching children the beginnings of reading, writing, arithmetic, Coptic language, and liturgy.[163] In other words, he was himself literate, as were other craftsmen and tradesmen of his period. Despite these multiple interests and professions, the surviving works of his that we know are mainly icons and manuscripts. Since what he and Yuhanna al-Armani had in common was their artistic career, it is not unlikely that Yuhanna too would have painted frescoes and decorated churches and rich people's houses, just like Ibrahim al-Nasikh, especially if Yuhanna did in fact begin his career as a *naqqash*. This specialization might even have been how the two men became acquainted in the first place and led them to collaborate on many works.

However, whereas Yuhanna al-Armani did not tell us much about himself or his work, Ibrahim al-Nasikh left valuable remarks and personal comments on the margins of the manuscripts that he copied and illuminated. They are a mine of information on this person, yet to be fully explored. However, Yuhanna al-Armani is not known to have copied any manuscripts and did not leave any written comments on

whatever artwork he could have accomplished, such as wall-paintings for example. It is only the icons which he signed and dated which are confirmed to be his work.

A closer look at the icons on which Ibrahim and Yuhanna collaborated suggests a number of points that can help shed light on the career of Yuhanna. For one thing, Yuhanna may in fact have been trained by Ibrahim al-Nasikh and learnt the trade from him, since the earliest dated work by Yuhanna is an icon dated 1742 on which he collaborated with Ibrahim al-Nasikh. Yuhanna did not begin to sign his icons independently before 1759. Ibrahim al-Nasikh, on the other hand, has works with his signature alone before 1742. Ibrahim is also known to have illuminated manuscripts with various icons long before that—his earliest illuminated manuscript is dated 1737.[164] In Nubar Der Mikaelian's study of Yuhanna al-Armani, he argues that the joint works of Yuhanna and Ibrahim al-Nasikh carry Ibrahim's artistic style and that Yuhanna's main contribution to these works was the colored decorations.[165] Another scholar, Shuruq Muhammad 'Ashur, has reached a similar conclusion by studying the icons at the church of Abu Sayfayn in Old Cairo.[166]

The most famous of Ibrahim and Yuhanna's joint works are indeed those still housed at the church of Abu Sayfayn. It seems that Ibrahim al-Nasikh was contracted to restore and decorate the church. This included rebuilding and restoration, repainting and decorating the walls and dome, repainting the old icons in the church—some of which date back to the thirteenth century—as well as painting new icons, in addition to the woodwork in the church including the iconostasis, and finally, hanging the icons. Ibrahim in fact documented all the works he was contracted to do for this project on the margins of one of the manuscripts of the church.[167] Not surprisingly, Ibrahim was also commissioned to copy new manuscripts for the church and to restore the old ones already there.[168] Thus, Ibrahim was the main contractor of the project who then sub-contracted some of the work to his associates, chief among whom was Yuhanna al-Armani. The study by Shuruq Muhammad 'Ashur of the icons at Abu Sayfayn church confirms this. For even though Yuhanna and Ibrahim did *not* co-sign most of the icons in the church, research confirms that in fact the eighteenth-century icons were painted by both Yuhanna and Ibrahim with the help of a

number of associates of varying competence. Thus, in some of the icons, the parts of the decoration deemed less important were left to assistants. This might explain a number of mistakes and discrepancies such as the differences in quality in painting between the faces compared to the feet, for example.[169]

All this suggests that Yuhanna al-Armani was, early on in his career, Ibrahim's disciple before becoming an independent icon-painter. This might explain why later on they eventually stopped co-signing icons. Yuhanna had by then become a master in his own right.

Another explanation for the emergence of icons with the single signature of Yuhanna might be that the increase in demand led them to divide the labor more efficiently so that each of them started doing some paintings independently of the other while also using associates of lesser competence and disciples. This would suggest a more hierarchical organization of the work, possibly one that could be run more efficiently and allowing the chief craftsman to use assistants to help him.

We know that Yuhanna al-Armani employed his nephew Guirguis Salib al-Naqqash and his niece's son Hanna, son of Yusuf Karkur. Yuhanna's own son, Guirguis, is also likely to have collaborated with his father since he too was a *naqqash*. Similarly, Ibrahim al-Naskih received help from his brother-in-law Yunan al-Naqqash, son of Tadrus al-Qassis (the Priest) in painting and decorating,[170] as well as from his brother Salib and his nephew Hanna Ayyub in copying manuscripts.[171] Families working together as a team were common in many crafts and professions. Brothers teamed up in business transactions, while merchants had family members travel with their merchandise. Therefore, the fact that Yuhanna and Ibrahim could bring a son or nephew or in-law to be part of the working team is entirely in keeping with practices at the time.

The last known collaborative work between Yuhanna al-Armani and Ibrahim al-Nasikh dates to 1755. This of course does not necessarily mean that they then stopped working together. It would seem through the large number of icons they produced that they each relied on other assistants. Probably, it no longer made economic sense for them to paint the same icon together, especially as demand for the works increased. Instead, each painted his own icons and left the lesser work of decoration to assistants. It would also seem that they further divided

the labor among them so that Yuhanna specialized in painting icons while Ibrahim specialized in copying manuscripts. The growth of the church-building and restoration project affected the artistic economy and division of labor within it.

6

The Known Works of Yuhanna al-Armani

This chapter focuses on the traditions and economics of craftsmen in the field within w.hich Yuhanna al-Armani worked. We can gauge some of the influences that affected the artistic production of the late Ottoman period in Egypt by focusing on the works of Yuhanna al-Armani and his contemporaries.

Using both the visual and archival material I will try to place Yuhanna al-Armani's artwork within the context of the division and organization of labor. Many questions spring to mind. Did Yuhanna do all this work by himself or in a workshop that he managed with assistants and disciples? How was he commissioned for an icon? Did he have icons ready for sale at his studio or were they all made to order? Questions such as these, which relate to the organization of work, might also be of relevance to art historians who seek to understand the artistic production of the age and make sense of the relative diversity in the field.

There is as yet no complete catalogue of Coptic icons produced in Egypt or surviving in Egyptian churches and monasteries.[172] Thus, there is no complete listing of all the icons attributed to Yuhanna al-Armani. It is not my intention, nor is it within my ability, to undertake such a cataloguing here. I have instead relied on regular visits to the churches of Cairo and Old Cairo in order to record Yuhanna's icons, which still

hang there. I rely here on these observations and on a study that was undertaken some forty years ago, in 1971, by Nubar Der Mikaelian but never published.[173]

Given the constraints of available primary sources, I am unable to offer a detailed construction of the way that Yuhanna worked or the organization of his work. We could, however, reach some tentative conclusions and suggest possible explanations for some of the defining characteristics of his work.

Yuhanna's work can be broadly divided into two categories: works commissioned for churches and monasteries, and works commissioned by individual patrons.

Works Commissioned for Churches

The majority of Yuhanna's surviving and identified works are housed in Coptic churches and monasteries. I have visited the churches in Old Cairo and Harat Zuwayla in order to see the icons and record the inscriptions on them. These icons were usually commissioned directly by the *nuzzar* or overseers of the churches.[174] When a church made an order, it was usually for several icons which Yuhanna worked on simultaneously.

Yuhanna worked on decorating two types of churches. The first were ancient and pre-Ottoman churches that were restored and redecorated in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, such as the Hanging Church and Abu Sayfayn Church, both in Old Cairo, and the church of the Virgin in Harat Zuwayla. The second type of churches were those that had been completely destroyed and were entirely rebuilt during the eighteenth century, such as the churches of the Virgin (al-Damshiriya) and Qasriyat al-Rihan, both in Old Cairo, as well as newly constructed churches, new additions, usually to existing monasteries, such as the church of Yuhanna al-Mi'midan and al-Malak Mikha'il (John the Baptist and the Archangel Michael) and the church of Abu al-Sayfayn, both at the monastery of Anba Bula on the Red Sea.

Restored and Renovated Churches

1. Monastery of Mar Mina at Fumm al-Khalij, Old Cairo

A close look at some of the decorations on this church sheds light on

different aspects of the career of Yuhanna al-Armani, which his icons alone do not show.

This important monastery and the multiple churches attached to it contain several of Yuhanna's works. In addition to icons, Yuhanna al-Armani designed two semicircular niches in the east wall of the sanctuary (sing. *sharqiya*) for this monastery: one in the eastern wall of the altar of the main church and another in the eastern wall of the altar of the upper church of Mar Guirguis.

Like other Coptic churches and monasteries, Dayr Mar Mina flourished during the eighteenth century. The most significant era was when Mu'allim Ibrahim Jawhari was the *nazir* of the monastery.[175] The first recorded mention of his tenure comes on 14 Shawwal 1186/8 January 1773[176] and he was known to be in charge until the end of his life on 12 Dhu-l Qa'ida 1209/31 May 1795.[177]

It appears that Ibrahim Jawhari commissioned Yuhanna al-Armani to produce several works for his monastery. In 1772, a group of ten icons seems to have been painted at the same time for the main church, on his orders. The ten were done in the same artistic style, size, color scheme, and backgrounds, and they are all half-portraits. However, it seems that the order included other icons that have since disappeared. On the icon of Jesus Christ is the following inscription: "the person overseeing those *eleven* icons was *al-mu'allim* Ibrahim Jawhari, may You reward him, O Lord, in Your Kingdom, painted by the humble Hanna al-Armani."

Yuhanna also depicted Christ's story from the Nativity to Pentecost in a series of twelve consecutive icons, arranged at the interior entrance of the church in 1196/1781. Yuhanna had painted a similar series, of fifteen icons, for the church of Abu Sirja in Old Cairo in 1195/1780. Even earlier, he had painted, together with Ibrahim al-Nasikh, a biblical narrative in a series of ten icons depicting the life of the Virgin Mary for the Hanging Church of the Virgin in Old Cairo in 1760. This tradition of painting biblical stories in a series of consecutive panels or independent icons has precedents in Egypt; at the church of the Virgin at Harat Zuwayla, the painting that hangs on the iconostasis of the sanctuary of the Archangel Gabriel is divided into seven frames representing the seven major feasts: Annunciation, Christmas, Epiphany, Palm Sunday, Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost. This undated icon pre-dates the sixteenth century.

Significantly, the painting of scenes depicting biblical stories, which was probably intended to convey to worshipers who were illiterate important religious narratives, was a form that is used extensively in the manuscripts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These contain the visual material related to the subject matter that the religious texts covered. Thus, in the manuscript of the New Testament (the four gospels) copied in 1689 and currently housed at the Coptic Museum Library in Cairo, the illustrator depicted most of the subjects of the New Testament and placed each painting before the relevant text, including the miracles of Jesus Christ.[178] Another manuscript, dated 1678, includes thirteen beautiful miniatures of unusual subjects in Coptic art, all related to the miracles of the Virgin.[179] In other words, the subject matter of these manuscript paintings was not essentially different from the icons that were painted in the churches.

This same church also includes another type of work that Yuhanna produced, one that has often been ignored by modern scholars: wall-painting or frescoes. In fact, the wall-paintings that Yuhanna produced provide us with further insight as to his total output. At the niche of the eastern wall of the sanctuary of the altar of the main church there are some wall-paintings or frescoes that are worthy of notice. These consist of tripartite frames, set one above the other, with each of the three different paintings done at different periods. The inscriptions that they bear are of particular interest.

The first part on the higher section of the frame was done in 1163/1750 and was inscribed with the following text: "Remember O Lord Jesus Christ the person who looked after this *sharqiya*, 'Awad Hanas Beit Abu Taqiya, at your altar in the heavenly Jerusalem in your eternal Kingdom in the year 1163 'Arabiya." On the other side, the following text reads: "This holy *sharqiya* and honorable dome were done under the leadership of the Honorable Father Patriarch Anba Murqus 106, in the days of our Father al-Qummus Mina and al-Qummus Yusuf the priests of this holy monastery . . . AM 1466."

The second part, just under the first, was done in 1488/1772. This too was recorded in an inscription: "The person overseeing this altar and its painting was al-Mu'allim Ibrahim Jawhari, Remember him O Lord in Your Kingdom, and his parents and his children, and his brother

al-Mu'allim Guirguis. Amen Amen Amen and it was in the year 1488 of the Blessed Martyrs." And on the other side of the *sharqiya* is the inscription, "This holy altar was constructed during the time of the honorable Patriarch Anba Yu'annas 107 and in the days of our Father al-Qummus 'Attiya and al-Qummus Sam'an and al-Qiss Ataniyus, the servants of this holy monastery. Painted by the humble Hanna al-Armani al-Qudsi."

The third and lowest part underwent conservation in the nineteenth century by Anstasi al-Rumi.

The 1772 inscription records another aspect of Yuhanna al-Armani's work. By the time he was working on it, he had behind him over three decades of experience. These wall-paintings, done very meticulously, are the first record of his work in this medium, known as *niqasha*. Here, on the upper part of the frame of this altar, his task was essentially to restore an earlier work and embellish it in an older style that pre-dates him.

At the upper church of Mar Guirguis at the same monastery, Yuhanna al-Armani painted the altar and the niche in its wall, the *sharqiya*, in their entirety. In the *sharqiya*, he depicted Jesus Christ enthroned, and then on each side he painted saints, five on the right-hand side and five on the left. The remaining space was painted with floral motifs. Yuhanna recorded his name on this icon: "This is the work of the humble Hanna al-Armani al-Qudsi al-Musawwir 1186." This is the first time, as far as we can tell, he describes himself as "al-Musawwir." The patron of this work seems to have not been a Copt. He was perhaps a Syrian Christian, for his name, as inscribed on the painting, is Bahri al-Mallan.

Yuhanna also painted a beautiful icon of the saint Mar Bihnam al-Suryani, with various scenes from the saint's life, at the upper church of St. Mar Bihnam and Anba Takla, which lies beside the church of Mar Guirguis at the same monastery. This church was usually dedicated to Syrians. Yuhanna signed his name on this icon: "The work of the humble Yuhanna Karabid al-Armani al-Qudsi in 1782." And this is the only time, as far as we are aware, that Yuhanna included his father's name in his signature.

Thus, Yuhanna was moving quite easily between icons and frescoes. The techniques involved in these two forms were obviously different from each other, but the subject matter was similar. The decorations of this church help us to see the diversity of his work.

2. Church of Abu Sayfayn

The church of Abu Sayfayn is one of the most important churches in Cairo. It was the first seat of the Coptic Patriarch in Cairo after moving from Alexandria in the tenth century. During the tenure of the priest Barsum al-Khashshab ibn Dawud[180] as its *nazir*, toward the middle of the eighteenth century, the church underwent extensive renovation; the priest was later ordained a bishop.[181]

This church is also important to understanding Yuhanna al-Armani's career, first because it houses the largest collection of his icons, whether those he painted alone or in collaboration with Ibrahim al-Nasikh. They number ninety-eight in all. Second, it is particularly important because this impressive number of icons and works represents all the main stages in Yuhanna's career, as it includes icons he painted alone or in collaboration over a period of some thirty-five years (1745–80). He also seems to have participated in the decoration work completed in the years 1765–66, when the church underwent significant renovation and restoration. Ibrahim al-Nasikh was assisted by Yuhanna in carrying out the restoration of the old icons and other decorative elements in the church. We know Ibrahim al-Nasikh to have restored and copied a number of manuscripts. Sources indicate that Yuhanna al-Armani and Ibrahim al-Nasikh repainted old thirteenth-century icons for this church.[182] By comparing the works that Yuhanna had carried out for the church at Dayr Mar Mina at Fumm al-Khalij, which included the *sharqiya* and the walls of the altar, it becomes clear that he probably took part in most of the works carried out at the church of Abu Sayfayn. What this shows is that Yuhanna was not only an icon-painter but also worked on all the decorative parts of the church, which included the wall-paintings and the woodwork.

Rebuilt and Newly-constructed Churches

1. Church of the Virgin (al-Damshiriya)

This church is part of the monastery of Abu Sayfayn in Old Cairo. After the death of its *nazir*, Mu'allim Manqarios Khayr Allah,[183] and according to the document dated 6 Dhu-l Hijja 1162/ 17 November 1749, the new *nazir*, Mu'allim Mikha'il Manqarios, obtained a permit from the chief *qadi* to rebuild the church. In fact he knocked it down entirely, cleared

the land, dug foundations, and built a new church. The cost was 53,448 *nisf fadda*s and the work was completed in 1752.[184]

During that same year, Yuhanna al-Armani and Ibrahim al-Nasikh painted the icon of the Archangel Mikha'il (dated AM 1469/AD 1752) at the request of the church's same *nazir*, Mu'allim Mikha'il Manqarios. They co-signed the icon, and the bottom part of the icon includes the inscription, "O God of Mikha'il, help us, painted for the church of the Virgin (al-Damshiriya), God remember your caring believer/slave *al-mu'allim* Mikha'il Manqarios in the heavens 1164." During that same year as well, Yuhanna and Ibrahim painted another icon of Mar Guirguis for the same church, this time without explicitly including the name of the person who commissioned it.

Thus, Yuhanna and Ibrahim's works for this church were produced at the same time as the church's reconstruction and at the request of the *nazir* in charge of the project. It is therefore quite probable that Yuhanna and Ibrahim had been assigned all the decorating work of the church as one commission. After Mu'allim Mikha'il Manqarios, the *nazir* of the church, was Mu'allim Mikha'il al-Mubashir, son of Guirguis al-Suwayfi.[185] Apparently, the new *nazir* did not commission any new icons from Yuhanna al-Armani. However, he is known to have paid for another icon painted by Ibrahim al-Nasikh alone, dated AM 1481/AD 1765.

According to Der Mikaelian, Yuhanna al-Armani's icons that survive at the church of the Virgin (al-Damshiriya) can be dated thus:

1752: two icons, painted jointly with Ibrahim al-Nasikh
1763: one icon, painted alone
1780: five icons, painted alone
Eight undated icons, painted alone

The church of the Virgin (al-Damshiriya) preserves Yuhanna's earliest icons. All the icons he painted alone or jointly with Ibrahim al-Nasikh and similarly the icons Ibrahim al-Nasikh painted alone were all commissioned by the church's *nazir*.

2. Church of Qasriyat al-Rihan (Pot of Basil)

The church of Qasriyat al-Rihan is part of the group of churches at

Old Cairo. On 15 October 1777, the church completely burnt down. The details of the fire and destruction were recorded at the court of the al-Salih Mosque in Cairo, for the *nazir*, Mu'allim Salib 'Abd al-Masih, brought legal witnesses from the court to record the fire: "The said church was inspected in their presence and found to be burning with the fire still raging in the wood and the walls and the building entirely destroyed because of the fire."[186] Based on this report, the *nazir* was able to obtain a permit allowing the rebuilding of the church. Therefore, all the surviving icons in the church post-date this fire. Nubar Der Mikaelian lists twenty-eight icons produced by Yuhanna al-Armani for the church of Qasriyat al-Rihan, painted from 1779 to 1783. Unfortunately, Der Mikaelian does not list the commissioner of each icon, nor the person who paid for it, and therefore we cannot determine whether it was the church's *nazir* who paid for each of them or donors. However, it is clear that the time frame during which all those icons were produced is the period of the rebuilding of the church and therefore it is quite possible that the icons were indeed commissioned by the *nazir* as part of that effort.

The church was undergoing renovation in 2006, and I have therefore been unable to visit it and study the icons. However, we have reproductions of five icons painted by Yuhanna in the year 1194/1780. The five were commissioned by Mu'allim Antony, son of the late priest/Qummus Sulayman Abu Taqiya.[187] Antony was not the church's *nazir* but was a Copt who endowed extensive estates to the benefit of churches and monasteries. His father, who died on 18 Jumada II 1192/14 June 1778, was a priest.[188] He might have been a priest at the church of Qasriyat al-Rihan, and it is therefore possible that Antony commissioned these icons and offered them to the church to honor his father's memory.

The five icons are characterized by a similar style and color scheme. This suggests that Yuhanna painted them all at the same time using the same materials and paints. The same style is also evident in another group of ten icons also painted at a single time. The latter were commissioned by the *nazir* of the monastery of Mar Mina in Old Cairo, Mu'allim Ibrahim al-Jawhari. Similarly, Yuhanna painted another group of unsigned icons in 1781 as part of a single order commissioned by the church of St. Barbara in Old Cairo. These seven icons are in the same

materials, paints, and size and all have similar backgrounds. Finally, a large group of icons at the Hanging Church in Old Cairo were commissioned by the *nazir mu'allim* Mu'allim 'Abid Khuzam al-Bayadi in 1193, and again they all seem to be part of the same group, also painted by Yuhanna.

Yuhanna's works and icons are preserved in other churches in Egypt as well. However, there are certain characteristics that all the works commissioned by *nuzzar* seem to share. First, many of these works seem to have been done inside the destined churches themselves; that is to say that the artist moved to the church and set up his workshop there. This would be particularly the case with wall-paintings.

The following table lists Yuhanna's known works by church:[189]

Church or monastery	**Icons Yuhanna painted alone**		**Icons Yuhanna painted jointly with Ibrahim al-Nasikh**		**Total**
	Definite	Possible	Definite	Possible	
Hanging (al-Mu'allaqa) Church	40	24		1	65
Abu Sirja Church	15	24	1		40
al-Sitt Barbara Church		31	1		32
Qasriyat al-Rihan Church	21	7			28
Dayr al-Banat		1			1
Church of Abu Shinuda		9	1	3	13
Church of Abu Sayfayn	23	54	21		98
Church of the Virgin (al-Damshiriya)	6	8	3	1	18
Mar Mina Monastery	10	4	3	1	18
Church of the Virgin at Harat Zuwayla		5			5
Coptic Museum		9	3	2	14
Total	115	176	33	8	332

Clearly, the church of Abu Sayfayn contains the largest combined number of Yuhanna al-Armani's works, including those he carried out jointly with Ibrahim al-Nasikh. The church also houses works that Ibrahim al-Nasikh painted alone, after the period when he and Yuhanna were producing works together. Since it is likely that the interior decoration of a given church was usually assigned as one contract to an artist or workshop, the later works for the same churches that Yuhanna and Ibrahim each signed on their own suggest that the two men might not have ended their business venture but had divided up the work between them in a different manner.

Works Commissioned by Individual Patrons

It is interesting to note that individual patrons were also commissioning Yuhanna al-Armani to work for them. There are numerous ways in which patrons could do business with painters like Yuhanna. A patron could commission Yuhanna al-Armani to paint a particular icon and then offer it as a gift to a church. Often these works bear a record of the names of the patron and artist, and an indication that it was a gift. Occasionally, a patron might choose an icon from Yuhanna's workshop and add a special inscription to it, probably including his name, and offer it to a church—or indeed hang it in his own home. This is interesting because it is usually thought that craftsmen during this period produced an object when the potential buyer ordered it. The fact that Yuhanna kept his icons in a workshop meant that he was confident that they would find a buyer. This could be an indication of the commercialization of his production.

There are a number of surviving icons that Yuhanna painted to the order of patrons who were not *nuzzar* of any churches, who nonetheless offered these icons to churches. An analysis of the inscriptions on Coptic icons indicates that sometimes the artist would paint an icon and put it up for sale and then add the name of the buyer and the church at a later time. It is clear that Yuhanna al-Armani also occasionally did this, as his inheritance deed includes "15 *riyal*s the value of nine painted wooden boards;"[190] that is, at the time of his death he had nine ready and unsold icons without the name of any patron inscribed on them. The estimated price of 15 *riyal*s in the inheritance deed works out at approximately 67 *para*s per icon.

Other patrons preferred to hang icons in their own homes. It is difficult to gauge the extent of this market, for the majority of existing icons have survived in churches and monasteries. We know almost nothing about the domestic architecture and interior decoration of Coptic homes, including the homes of Coptic notables. However, there are indications that Ibrahim al-Nasikh oversaw the decoration of the houses of rich Copts and senior bureaucrats.[191] It is therefore quite probable that Yuhanna, too, joined Ibrahim in interior decoration. There is one surviving reference to Yuhanna having painted an icon for a Copt in order to hang in his home. This icon, of St. Dumyana, has finally settled at the Hanging Church of the Virgin. It is inscribed with the following words: "Painted for the home of *al-mu'allim* Guirguis, son of the late *mu'allim* Mikha'il al-Faydawi, by the humble Hanna al-Armani."[192] Similarly, an icon painted by Ibrahim al-Nasikh, currently housed at the Coptic Museum in Cairo, bears the inscription: "Painted for the blessed stand in the home of *al-mu'allim* Guirguis Fanus."[193] This is not surprising, since we know that Copts considered icons an important element of domestic interior decoration. And since the eighteenth century saw the increase in the fortunes amassed by wealthy Copts, and a consequent rivalry in buying and building large houses, it is highly likely that demand for domestic icons increased during that century as well, perhaps as much as the demand for churches and monasteries. Unfortunately, most of these have not survived.

The Organization of Labor

The icon market witnessed a significant revival in Egypt during the eighteenth century. The increased demand for icons meant that there were more work opportunities, encouraging many people to join in this trade. The careers of Yuhanna al-Armani and his partner Ibrahim al-Nasikh throw light on the parameters of this market and the ways in which work was organized within it to meet the increasing demand for their product.

The church of Abu Sayfayn in Old Cairo offers a good example of how work might have been organized. Work on restoring and conserving such a big church must have taken considerable time and effort. By analyzing the surviving works, we can deduce that Ibrahim

al-Nasikh and Yuhanna al-Armani in fact relied on a number of assistants in each of the various types of work they produced for this church. This includes the painting of the icons. Examination of the icons at this church seems to suggest that there was more than one hand at work in their production; possibly Ibrahim and Yuhanna painted the sophisticated and difficult parts of each icon and then delegated unessential parts and the decoration and backgrounds to their assistants. Some of these apprentices and assistants made obvious blunders.[194]

Yuhanna al-Armani began working independently at least as early as 1759, since that is the date of his earliest surviving *independently signed* icon. Some scholars take this to indicate that he had in fact broken off his partnership with Ibrahim al-Nasikh at that date. There could be other interpretations, however, that fit better with the conditions that we have outlined above. Notably, one could argue that the increase in demand for religious artwork led these two artists to divide their work differently, to diversify their production by taking on icons as well as wall-paintings and to employ a larger number of assistants and apprentices to be able to meet the orders. Instead of jointly painting an icon, it would make more sense if each of them painted the important parts of a given icon, leaving the finishing touches and background decoration to the assistants. This is quite clear in the works at the church of Abu Sayfayn, where most of the works were carried out *after* 1759.

We know that at least two members of Yuhanna's family were *naqqashun* like him; the first is his son Guirguis 'al-Naqqash.'[195] Naturally, Guirguis would have helped in his father's work, since this was current practice in the crafts in Cairo. He might have even painted some of the icons entirely by himself without signing his name on them, as many artists continued to do.

The other *naqqash* in the family was Yuhanna's nephew Guirguis Salib al-Naqqash.[196] Guirguis Salib also seems to have worked on many of his uncle's icons; there is at least one clear reference to his participation. An inscription on the icon *The Martyrdom of St. Mar Guirguis*, at the Hanging Church, Old Cairo, indicates that Guirguis Salib played a part in painting it.

A third member of Yuhanna's family who might also have worked in Yuhanna's workshop is his niece's son, "Hanna, the adolescent, son

of Yusuf Karkur."[197] His name appears on one of Yuhanna's icons at the Hanging Church, the *Martyrdom of St. Mar Guirguis*.

Family members working in partnership was a common business practice during this period. Yuhanna's colleague and partner, Ibrahim al-Nasikh, also employed and worked with members of his own family, including his brother-in-law, Yunan al-Naqqash, son of Tadrus al-Qassis (the priest), his wife's brother, in painting and decorating works.[198] He also used his brother al-Qummus Salib and his nephew Hanna Ayyub in copying manuscripts.[199]

Many of the works that Yuhanna al-Armani produced required close cooperation between him, as a painter, and other specialists in woodwork and metalwork. Chief among these items were the *maqsura*s, frames established and placed in a central location in a church especially to hang a large icon, usually of one of the saints. It comprised a wooden or metal frame with inlaid decorations. The frames were probably constructed in advance to fit a given wall and the measurements then carefully taken to make made-to-order icons. This sort of construction and the painting were usually done within the church itself because of the large sizes of the works. The best examples are the *maqsuras* of the Hanging Church of the Virgin, one of which, bearing an icon of the Virgin Mary, was produced by Yuhanna al-Armani and Ibrahim al-Nasikh in 1173/1759. Another icon, also at the same church, was painted by Yuhanna alone in 1778. This suggests that Yuhanna's workshop might have employed craftsmen with different specialties.

Signatures on Icons

Artists' signatures on icons are a relatively new phenomenon in Coptic art history. It is a tradition that Ibrahim al-Nasikh seems to have started, perhaps because he was accustomed to signing his name on the manuscripts he copied and on the miniatures with which he illustrated the manuscripts. When he started painting icons, he would naturally have transferred his habit of adding a signature to those too. Interestingly, Turkish artists in the eighteenth century also began a similarly new tradition of signing the miniatures they included in manuscripts.[200] There does not seem to be a clear link between those two new contemporary phenomena in Coptic and Turkish art. Signing icons might

be an expression of the secular (non-religious) trend that prevailed in icon-production circles at the time, as the process moved from one dominated by men of the religious establishment—priests and monks—to an art produced by professional artists who made a living from it. A signature was a means by which the artists expressed their identities and promoted their works, potentially attracting new clients and more business.

Yuhanna al-Armani: Tradition and Innovation

In the absence of a thorough catalogue of Coptic icons, before and after Yuhanna's time, we cannot easily compare the subjects that he painted in his icons with the traditional subjects of Coptic history, or determine whether he painted the same subjects and motifs in new styles or introduced new subjects and styles. It is difficult at the moment to discuss his innovation in terms of the subject matter of the icons he painted.

Skálová, who has worked a lot on these icons, argued that the predominant influence came from outside, but she nevertheless found some evidence of local influence. She argues that the Coptic icons underwent significant development in the Ottoman period, due to local factors, notably in the depiction of local saints and the painting of their stories. She argues that these are Coptic creations.[201] Tina Tribe, on the other hand, argues that the feature that distinguishes the work of the school of Yuhanna and Ibrahim is that they integrated popular tendencies. For even though this school—as she argues—retained many characteristics of the Byzantine tradition, it came to incorporate unique local elements.[202]

Interestingly, Ottoman court painting also underwent similar changes during the same period, moving toward innovative features that were not in the traditional modes. While Ottoman painting traditionally focused on members of the ruling dynasty and senior men of state, eighteenth-century Ottoman painting was more interested in celebrations and other aspects of society as well as the expressions and reactions of people from various social backgrounds;[203] it too was moving in a more popular direction. Such a development must be related to social conditions that need to be elucidated by historians in order for their context to be fully understood.

These different views all emanate from the field of art history—with which I am not familiar—yet they are all based on comparing Egyptian icons with icons from other parts of the Ottoman Empire.

As for artistic style, as we mentioned before, in most of his works Yuhanna al-Armani appears to have followed in the paths of his predecessors. So, for example, the idea of serialized icons in which a given story, usually the story of Jesus Christ or the Virgin Mary, was illustrated in a number of paintings, was a tradition with a long history. Many extant icons painted before the eighteenth century followed this style, as for example the icon of *The Seven Major Feasts* at the church of the Virgin at Harat Zuwayla, which was painted some time before the sixteenth century. Similarly, this style was used in many miniatures in manuscripts of the seventeenth century. It also appeared on the *sharqiya* of the altar, the niche in the east wall of the altar, at the church of Dayr Mar Mina at Fumm al-Khalij. This painting shows how Yuhanna al-Armani had added, in the same style, to work that was already done before him; the *sharqiya* already existed and Yuhanna's role was to restore it in its original, earlier appearance.

Conclusion

Trying to understand any particular trend out of a historical setting can easily lead to a distorted view of the matter. The same is true for the legacy of an artist like Yuhanna al-Armani. The present study has argued that Yuhanna's icons developed and flourished in the second half of the eighteenth century as a result of a combination of factors that coincided at that time. It has argued against the dominant view among many scholars that the artist had recently arrived in Egypt and had come with his cultural luggage, for the most part a set of exogenous cultural traditions that flourished in the new society he moved to. The traditions that Yuhanna introduced are assumed to have been more modern and more developed than those that could be found locally. In arguing for this view, most scholars have given little consideration to the local and regional historical contexts in which Yuhanna lived and worked. Insufficient attention was paid to the early days of his career and his training at the hands of one of the most prominent artists of the time, Ibrahim al-Nasikh.

Yuhanna al-Armani's biography offers a great opportunity to write about one aspect of the history of Armenians in Ottoman Egypt. It also provides a good starting point to understanding the history of Coptic art and culture. Through his production and the way he organized his

work, we can get a better idea of the social and economic life of artists and artistic production in the late Ottoman period.

Armenians have had a presence in Egypt since the tenth century. The Ottoman period, with the political, economic, and social conditions that the empire brought into existence, increasingly provided this community with opportunities to integrate with Egyptian society at large. Furthermore, the similarity of creed between Egyptian Copts and Armenians allowed Armenians to integrate with the Coptic community in particular. The result was a vibrant, if numerically limited, Armenian community that integrated well with Egyptian Copts. Yuhanna al-Armani's biography brings this historical reality to life, for his family had settled in Egypt, at least since the seventeenth century, and his own two marriages were to Coptic women. This integration allowed Yuhanna al-Armani to make a career out of decorating Coptic churches.

This same period which saw the flowering of Yuhanna al-Armani and his work corresponded to a flourishing of the Coptic community in Egypt, a renaissance of sorts that began in the mid-seventeenth century as an expression of changing local and regional circumstances. The developments that affected the structure of the Ottoman state and its political system also affected the provinces, including Egypt. These developments allowed local identities to dig roots. While nominal power continued to rest with the Ottoman state, rising local elites were the de facto rulers. Coptic *mubashir*s were among the Egyptian elite who experienced considerable social mobility and amassed sizeable fortunes during this period. Their power and wealth allowed them to patronize many projects on behalf of the Coptic community, including a cultural and artistic renaissance that saw most churches and monasteries restored and rebuilt. The movement was accompanied by a parallel artistic renaissance that included icons, wall-paintings, and manuscripts. The Egyptian market thus created a growing number of artists and craftsmen to meet this increasing demand for artistic works and the growing number of religious buildings being brought back to use.

Both Yuhanna al-Armani and his partner Ibrahim al-Nasikh represent a new trend in Coptic art. At their hands, religious artistic production moved from an activity undertaken by men of religion to lay professional artists who specialized in this sort of work. This is part

of the wider changes the Coptic community itself was undergoing and which similarly affected its representation before ruling authorities. For the social and political representation of the Coptic community also shifted from the hands of the men of religion, namely the patriarchs, to laymen, the senior *mubashir*s. The phenomenon is a reflection of broad currents in Egyptian society at large in the eighteenth century, namely the rise of secular tendencies in culture and social practice, a context that was important to the Coptic renaissance of the time and made possible the building and restoration of many churches—in essence a religious concern.

Yuhanna al-Armani came halfway through this movement and enriched it. He started his career in Egypt as a *naqqash*, which was to remain his principal trade throughout his life. We have several indications of his work as a *naqqash* before he moved on to paint icons. Due to the iconoclastic stance of the Armenian Church and the absence of an Armenian icon tradition, Yuhanna al-Armani painted icons in the Coptic tradition, especially since he began his career and was probably apprenticed to a famous Coptic artist of the time, Ibrahim al-Nasikh. An analysis of Yuhanna's work proves that he followed the dominant Coptic artistic tradition of his time in terms of subject matter and artistic style. His patrons were, almost without exception, Copts.

We have two biographies of contemporary artists then, Yuhanna al-Armani and Ibrahim al-Nasikh. We know enough of their social and economic circumstances to know that they were socially respected and enjoyed reasonable fortune. They had contacts with higher echelons of Coptic society, while Yuhanna al-Armani himself and his son belonged to the higher strata of the Armenian community in Egypt. All this indicates that at least artists specializing in religious subjects enjoyed a certain status in that society.

As yet there are no full-length historical studies of this group of artists and craftsmen specializing in religious artwork who flourished during the eighteenth century so that we may better understand their social status. However, the indicators we have suggest that they enjoyed a moderate social status with an income that allowed them to own houses and amass some wealth. Questions still remain on the status of Muslim artists, especially painters. We know very little about the nature of their

artistic production and their social status, especially in light of the prevailing belief that Islamic culture did not accept visual representation. Did the weakening grip of religious culture, the growth of non-religious tendencies in Egyptian society in the eighteenth century, change the prevailing attitudes toward painting?

While the phenomenon of the rise of professional artists in the eighteenth century is a result of important transformations in Egyptian society at large, artists such as Yuhanna al-Armani and Ibrahim al-Nasikh themselves further contributed to the renaissance in Coptic culture. They created new ways of producing their artwork and meeting the increasing demand and number of their clients. This popularity of their artwork also encouraged a parallel growth of popular tendencies in the icons they produced—a phenomenon that has yet to receive its adequate share of study. For art historians continue to focus on court culture and the arts related to the ruling elite, while Yuhanna al-Armani's artwork, and that of his contemporaries, throw light on arts which were tied to those of more ordinary people who represented different sectors of Egyptian society and which still await thorough research.

Appendix 1
Summary of the Inheritance of Farisiniya, Yuhanna al-Armani's First Wife

Document: The inheritance of *al-dhimmiya* Farisiniya, daughter of *al-dhimmi* Tadrus (Yuhanna al-Armani's first wife)
Source: Qisma 'Arabiya Court, sijjil 122, case 198, p. 398
Date: 30 Jumada I 1184/21 September 1770

After the death of *al-dhimmiya* [the non-Muslim woman] Farisiniya daughter of *al-dhimmi* [the non-Muslim man] Tadrus son of *al-dhimmi* Mikha'il al-Nusrani al-Ya'qubi [the Jacobite Christian] al-Tukhi [of Tukh], al-Khayyat [the Tailor], her legal heirs were found to be exclusively her husband *al-dhimmi* Hanna, son of *al-dhimmi* Artin al-Qudsi, her mother *al-dhimmiya* Ward, daughter of *al-dhimmi* Bajran, and her four children from the above-mentioned husband: *al-dhimmi* Artin, *al-dhimmi* Guirguis, *al-dhimmi* Ya'qub, and *al-dhimmiya* Minkasha, the woman, exclusively without any other partners or any legal impediment.

The property that the deceased *al-dhimmiya* Farsiniya left behind to be inherited legally is this:

All of the share of 9 and 9/8 *qirat*s and half an eighth of a *qirat*, out of an original 24 *qirat*s held in common, in a building in Cairo at Khatt

Maydan al-Ghalla, close to Harat Mawlana Shaykh al-Islam Muhammad al-Ramli, inside Darb Junaynat Sawdun.

The document describes the location, parameters, and interior of the building in detail. The property is divided among her heirs according to the law:

What belonged to the above-mentioned *al-dhimmi* Hanna is a fourth of what belonged to his deceased wife, being two and 3/8 *qirat*s and 7/8 *qirat*s.

And her son Ya'qub, one of the sons mentioned above, receives from his deceased mother one *qirat* and 5/8 *qirat*s and a quarter of 1/8 of a *qirat*. Each of the two has the right to deal with his share in whatever legal way he chooses without any of the other heirs mentioned above.

This document has been written according to their own request to resort to it when needed.

Written on 7 Jumada I 1184

Appendix 2

Probate Document of Yuhanna al-Armani

Document: Probate document *(ishhad)* of Yuhanna al-Armani
Source: Qisma 'Arabiya Court, sijjil 127, case 195
Date: 6 Jumada I 1200/7 March 1786

In the presence of the following witnesses: Ahmad ibn *al-mukarram* [the honorable] Badawi al-Jammal al-Aslaymi and his brother *al-mukarram* Muhammad, *al-mukarram* Ibrahim al-Sa'idi son of the late Muhammad, *al-dhimmi* 'Azar, the jeweler at Khan Aqash, son of *al-dhimmi* Bulus al-Armani, *al-dhimmi* Yusuf Samin son of *al-dhimmi* Shukri al-Halabi, *al-dhimmi* 'Ashiq Silan son of Guirguis al-Armani, *al-dhimmi* Dawud son of Mirza al-Khazraji[204], *al-dhimmi* Ibrahim son of Guirguis al-Aqwasi al-Qassis [the priest] Istafani son of *al-dhimmi* Wartan al-Qudsi al-Nusrani, they all witnessed and testified to what will be mentioned in this document, which is that *Al-dhimmi* Yuhanna al-Armani, son of Artin, son of Karabid al-Qudsi al-Nusrani al-Armani, testified that his belongings and properties and what is under his control in his house which he shared with his wife *al-dhimmiya* Dimyana daughter of *al-dhimmi* Guirguis 'Anbar al-Sayigh (the Jeweler) al-Nusrani al-Qibti [the Coptic Christian].

What is in his house, that he shares with his wife *al-dhimmiya* Dimyana, the woman, daughter of *al-dhimmi* Guirguis ‘Anbar al-Sayigh [the jeweler] al-Nusrani al-Qibti in Darb al-Junayna at Khatt al-Qantara al-Jadida: all of two red robes, a *kammuni*, three *qumsan*s [under-garments], two *qiftan alaja*s, two robes, one *qaliq*, two bedcovers of *sheet*, a cotton-filled mattress, a copper pot with a lid, three copper plates, and nothing more.

And *al-dhimmi* Yuhanna who is mentioned above testified that both he and his wife eat, drink, and are clothed at the expense of his son *al-dhimmi* Artin, who worked at the mint, out of his own personal money, seeking God’s rewards.

Al-dhimmi Yuhanna *al-rassam* testified that his family, his wife *al-dhimmiya* Dimyana, his three sons from another woman, *al-dhimmi* Artin al-Jallal [the employee at the mint], *al-dhimmi* Guirguis al-Naqqash [the painter], and *al-dimmiya* Minkasha and his niece *al-dhimmiya* Sima, the woman, daughter of Khashdur son of Artin and her husband *al-dhimmi* Dawud al-Khazraji, that none of them owed him anything or were owed anything by him: no rights, no demands, no silver, no gold, no money, no copper, no belongings or properties, no fabrics, no clothes, no jewelry, no properties, no walls, nor the price of anything, no debts, no deposits, nothing forgotten, nothing left in trust, no rights whatsoever.

The document was confirmed by *al-dhimmiya* Dimyana, *al-dhimmi* Artin al-Jallal and his two brothers, *al-dhimmiya* Sima and her husband, and all this was recorded on 6 Jumada I 1200.

Appendix 3
The Inheritance of Yuhanna al-Armani

Document: Yuhanna al-Armani's inheritance
Source: Qisma 'Arabiya Court sijjil 127, case 208, p. 172
Date: 30 Ramadan 1200/27 July 1786

In the presence of: *Al-dhimmi* 'Azar al-Sayigh [the jeweler] son of *al-dhimmi* Bulus, *al-dhimmi* Khashdur, the *wartabed* [leader of Armenian community], son of Jarwana, *al-dhimmi* Tadrus son of Maduras, *al-dhimmi* Dawud al-Khazraji son of *al-dhimmi* Mirza al-Kharbatli, *al-dhimmi* Hananian al-Qashtili son of Ohan, and *al-dhimmi* Yusuf al-Jabi son of Buqtusar al-Nusrani al-Armani.

They all testified that after the preceding death of *al-dhimmi* Hanna *al-rassam*, son of *al-dhimmi* Artin al-Qudsi al-Nusrani al-Armani, his inheritance was exclusively shared between: his wife, *al-dhimmiya* Dimyana, the woman, daughter of *al-dhimmi* Guirguis al-Sayigh [the jeweler] al-Nusrani al-Qibti [the Coptic Christian], and his three sons from another woman: *al-dhimmi* Artin al-Jallal [the employee at the mint], *al-dhimmi* Guirguis al-Naqqash [the painter], and *al-dhimmi*[ya] Minkasha, the woman, without any partners or any legal impediment.

The knowledge of both Dimyana, the wife, and Minkasha, the daughter, both mentioned above, of what will be mentioned here, was

established in the presence of our Lord Afandi [the judge] mentioned above with the testament of the witnesses mentioned above.

The property the deceased left behind to be inherited legally:

Belongings in his home at Darb Junaynat Sawdun the value of which was appraised by *al-dhimmi* Artin the son:

32 *riyal*s *bi-taqa* and 7 *nisf fadda*s:

6 *riyal*s: the value of 2 red robes, and two robes and a *qiftan*

2 and a half *riyal*s: for two Moroccan *haram*s

700 *nisf*s and 12 *nisf fadda*s: copper items the weight of which is 47 and a half *ratl*s

7 *riyal*s *bi-taqa* and 82 *nisf fadda*s:

15 *riyal*s: the value of nine painted wooden boards [icons]

60 *nisf fadda*s: the value of a wooden box.

A share of two *qirat*s and 3/8 *qirat* and 7/8 of 1/8 of a *qirat* in the building in Cairo at Khatt Maydan al-Ghalla close to Harat al-Shaykh al-Ramli, inside Darb Junaynat Sawdun, sold to *al-mu'allim* 'Ashiq Silan, son of *al-dhimmi* Karkur al-Nusrani al-Armani, as recorded at this same court at 53 *riyal*s *hajar bi-taqa*.

So the sum total of the properties and the share in the building is: 85 *riyal*s *bi-taqa* and 7 *nisf fadda*s.

All of the above, in addition to 4 *riyal*s and 83 *nisf fadda*s were spent as follows, with the approval of the wife, and *al-dhimmi* Guirguis and his sister Minkasha, all mentioned above with the legal testament of the witnesses mentioned above:

51 *riyal*s and 25 *nisf fadda*s: What was spent on burial preparations, funeral rites on the third and fortieth days, etc from *al-dhimmi* 'Ashiq Silan, mentioned above, with the approval of the mentioned heirs,

24 *riyal*s: three years' rent of the house where the deceased lived

10 *riyal*s: for the priest, the *wartabed*, and services

3 *riyal*s: to *al-dhimmi* Ibrahim and his wife, the servants of the deceased, and *al-dhimmi* Yusuf al-Jabi

al-mu'allim 'Ashiq Silan donated 1 *riyal* and 83 *nisf fadda*s.

All the heirs testified that none of them owed any of the others anything, and it was recorded on 30 Ramadan 1200.

Plates Description

The selection of color plates that appears between pages 60 and 61 features paintings of icons by Yuhanna al-Armani and Ibrahim al-Nasikh. This list details the way in which the two artists originally signed and dated these works. Most of these icons also appear in Nabil Selim Atalla's two-volume *Coptic Icons* (Lehnert and Landrock, 1998); references are provided below.

Christ Pantocrator. Coptic Museum, Cairo. By Ibrahim al-Nasikh and Yuhanna al-Armani. Signed (Arabic): "Painted by the humble Ibrahim and Yuhanna al-Armani." AM 1464 (AD 1748–49). Atalla, vol. 1, p. 71.

Virgin Mary and Child, and the Resurrection. Monastery of St. George at Harat Zuwayla, Cairo. By Yuhanna al-Armani. Signed (Arabic): "The work of the humble Hanna al-Armani 1173." AH 1173 (AD 1759–60). Atalla, vol. 1, p. 85.

Virgin Mary and Child, surrounded by ten scenes from the life of St Mary. Al-Mu'allaqa Church, Old Cairo. By Ibrahim al-Nasikh and Yuhanna al-Armani. Signed (Arabic): "The work of Ibrahim and Yuhanna al-Qudsi." AH 1173 (AD 1760). Atalla, vol. 1, p. 73.

Archangel Michael. Church of St. Mary, Harat Zuwayla, Cairo. By Yuhanna al-Armani. Signed (Arabic): "The work of the humble Hanna al-Armani 1172." AH 1172 (AD 1758–59). Atalla, vol. 1, p. 38.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Qasriyat al-Rihan, Old Cairo. By Yuhanna al-Armani. Signed (Arabic): "The work of Yuhanna al-Armani." AM 1497 (AD 1781). Atalla, vol. 2, p. 138.

St. Basilides. Coptic Museum, Cairo. By Yuhanna al-Armani. Signed in Arabic: "The work of the humble Hanna al-Armani." AH 1174 (AD 1760–61). Atalla, vol. 1, p. 89.

St. Mercuruis (Abu Sayfayn). St. Mercuruis Church, Old Cairo. By Yuhanna al-Armani. Signed (Arabic): "The work of the humble Hanna al-Armani." AM 1488, AH 1186 (AD 1772). Atalla, vol. 1, p. 87.

St. Menas. Qasriyat al-Rihan, Old Cairo. By Yuhanna al-Armani. Signed (Arabic): "The work of the humble Hanna al-Armani." AM 1497, AH 1194 (AD 1780). Atalla, vol. 2, p. 140.

St. Isidore and his father, sister, and mother. St. Menas Church, Old Cairo. By Ibrahim al-Nasikh and Yuhanna al-Armani. Unsigned. AM 1461 (AD 1745).

St Behnam. St. Menas Monastery, Old Cairo. By Yuhanna al-Armani. Signed (Arabic): "The work of the humble Hanna Karabid al-Armani al-Qudsi." AH 1196 (AD 782). Atalla, vol. 1, p. 86

St. Barsum the Naked. Qasriyat al-Rihan, Old Cairo. By Yuhanna al-Armani. Signed (Arabic): "The work of the humble Hanna al-Qudsi al-Armani 1194 heg." AH 1194 (AD 1779). Atalla, vol. 2, p. 140.

St. Takla Haymanot and St. Onnophirus (Nofer). St. Mercurius Church, Old Cairo. By Ibrahim al-Nasikh and Yuhanna al-Armani. Signed (Arabic): "Painted by the humble Ibrahim and Yuhanna al-Armani." AM 1471 (AD 1755). Atalla, vol. 1, p. 82.

Christ. St. Menas Church, Fumm al-Khalig, Old Cairo. By Yuhanna al-Armani. Signed in Arabic: "Painted by the humble Hanna al-Armani 1186 arabi." AM 1489, AH 1186 (AD 1773). Atalla, vol. 2, p. 102.

Virgin Mary. St. Menas Church, Fumm al-Khalig, Old Cairo. By Yuhanna al-Armani. Unsigned. Undated (AD 1773). Atalla, vol. 2, p. 102.

Archangel Gabriel. St. Menas Church, Fumm al-Khalig, Old Cairo. By Yuhanna al-Armani. Unsigned. Undated (AD 1773). Atalla, vol. 2, p. 103.

St. John the Baptist. St. Menas Church, Fumm al-Khalig, Old Cairo. By Yuhanna al-Armani. Unsigned. Undated (AD 1773). Atalla, vol. 2, p. 103.

St. Matthew the Evangelist. St. Menas Church, Fumm al-Khalig, Old Cairo. By Yuhanna al-Armani. Unsigned. Undated (AD 1773). Atalla, vol. 2, p. 106.

St. Luke the Evangelist. St. Menas Church, Fumm al-Khalig, Old Cairo. By Yuhanna al-Armani. Unsigned. AH 1186 (AD 1773). Atalla, vol. 2, p. 107

St. Mark the Evangelist. St. Menas Church, Fumm al-Khalig, Old Cairo. By Yuhanna al-Armani. Unsigned. Undated (AD 1773). Atalla, vol. 2, p. 106.

St. John the Evangelist. St. Menas Church, Fumm al-Khalig, Old Cairo. By Yuhanna al-Armani. Unsigned. Undated (AD 1773). Atalla, vol. 2, p. 107.

The Holy Family, detail from icon of Virgin and Child, surrounded by ten scenes from the life of St. Mary. Al-Mu'allaqa Church, Old Cairo. By Ibrahim al-Nasikh and Yuhanna al-Armani. Signed (Arabic): "The work of Ibrahim and Yuhanna al-Qudsi." AH 1173 (AD 1760).

Virgin and Child. St. Mary Church, Harat Zuwayla, Cairo. By Ibrahim al Nasikh and Yuhanna al-Armani. Signed (Arabic): "The work of Ibrahim and Hanna al-Armani." AM 1459 (AD 1743–44). Atalla, vol. 1, p. 72.

Archangel Michael. Coptic Museum, Cairo. By Ibrahim al-Nasikh and Yuhann al-Armani. Signed (Arabic): "The work of Ibrahim and Yuhanna al-Armani." AH 1164 (AD 1751). Atalla, vol. 1, p. 79.

St. Barbara. St. Barbara Church, Old Cairo. By Ibrahim al-Nasikh and Yuhanna al-Armani. Signed (Arabic): "The work of the humble Ibrahim and Yuhanna." AM 1462 (AD 1746). Atalla, vol. 1, p. 82.

St. George. Al-Damshiriya Church, Old Cairo. By Ibrahim al-Nasikh and Yuhanna al-Armani. Signed (Arabic): "Painted by the humble Ibrahim and Yuhanna al-Armani." AM 1469 (AD 1753). Atalla, vol. 1, p. 81.

St. Menas. St. Menas Church Fumm al-Khalig, Old Cairo. By Ibrahim al-Nasikh and Yuhanna al-Armani. Signed (Arabic): "The work of Ibrahim and Yuhanna al-Armani." Undated.

St. Bifam (Phoebammon). Qasriayt al-Rihan, Old Cairo. By Yuhanna al-Armani. Signed (Arabic): "The work of the humble Hanna al-Armani al-Qudsi 1194 arabi." AD 1194, AM 1497 (AD 1781). Atalla, vol. 2, p. 141.

St. Victor. St. Menas Church, Fumm al-Khalig, Old Cairo. By Ibrahim al-Nasikh and Yuhanna al-Armani. Signed (Arabic): "Work of the humble Ibrahim and Yuhanna al-Aramni." AM 1461 (AD 1745). Atalla, vol. 1, p. 80.

Notes

1 Peter Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism: Egypt, 1760–1840* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979 and Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1998), translated as *al-Judhur al-islamiya li-l-ra'smaliya, Misr 1760–1840*, translated by Mahrus Sulayman (Cairo: Dar al-Fikr, 1993).

2 Nelly Hanna, *In Praise of Books: A Cultural History of Cairo's Middle Class, Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2004).

3 Chrism is a blend of several oils, mainly olive oil, and aromatic essences, including myrrh and balsam. The preparation of this oil is an event in itself; it was a taxing and expensive procedure so that it is mentioned with pride as one of the achievements of a given patriarch in the official history of the patriarchs of the Church; not every Coptic patriarch managed to attain this.

4 Johann Michael Wansleben, *The Present State of Egypt, or, A New Relation of a Late Voyage into That Kingdom, Performed in the Years 1672 and 1673*, translated by M.D., B.D. (London: John Starkey, 1678; reprinted Westmead: Gregg International Publishers, 1972); J.M. Vansleb, *Histoire de l'eglise d'Alexandrie: fondée par S. Marc* (Paris, 1677).

5 Most scholars have cited Vansleb. For example, see Zuzana Skálová and Gawdat Gabra, *Icons of the Nile Valley* (Cairo: Longman, 2001), 79–80; Tania C. Tribe, "Icon and Narration in Eighteenth-Century Christian Egypt: The Works of Yuhanna Al-Armani Al-Qudsi and Ibrahim Al-Nasikh," *Art History* 27, no. 1 (2004): 63.

6 Coptic Patriarchate Library MS 103/810 Lutirgica.

7 Coptic Patriarchate Library MS 103/810, fo. 38 verso.

8 Coptic Patriarchate Library MS 103/810, fo. 41 verso.

9 *Coptic Patriarchate Library* MS 350/414 Theologica.

10 Kamil Salih Nakhla, *Silsilat tarikh al-babawat batarikat al-kursi al-iskandari*, issue 5 (Cairo: Matba'at Dayr al-Suryan, 1954), 134–37.

11 Skálová and Gabra, *Icons of the Nile Valley*, 138.

12 For example: Mat Immerzeel, *Coptic Icons. A Reader*, Egyptian-Netherlands Cooperation in Coptic Art Preservation Series, no.2 (Cairo: The Netherland-Flemish Institute in Cairo, 1992), 10–14; Zuzana Skálová, Magdi Mansour, and Youhanna Nesim Youssef, "Three Medieval Beam-Icons on Coptic Patriarchal Churches [*sic*] in Cairo," *Actes du Symposium de fouilles Coptes, Le Caire, 7–9 Novembre 1996* (Cairo: Société d'Archélogie Copte, 1998), 101–12; Tribe, "Icon and Narration," 63.

13 Tribe, "Icon and Narration," 69–70.

14 Tribe, "Icon and Narration," 75.

15 Mat Immerzeel, *Syrian Icons* (Rotterdam: Collection A. Touma, 1997), 24–25.

16 Tribe, "Icons and Narration," 73.

17 Melkites are Eastern Christians, primarily of Egypt and Syria, who adhered to Chalcedonian orthodoxy in preference to the monophysitism of the majority of Copts.

18 Skálová and Gabra, *Icons of the Nile Valley*, 46–47.

19 André Raymond, *al-Hirafiyun wa-l-tujjar fi-l-Qahira fi-l-qarn al-thamin 'ashr*, translated by Nasir Ahmad Ibrahim and Patsi Jamal al-Din, revised by Ra'uf 'Abbas (Cairo: al-Majlis al-A'la li-l-Thaqafa, 2005), vol. 2, 674. This is a translation of his *Artisans et commerçants au Caire au XVIIIe siècle* (Damas: Institut Français de Damas, 1973–74).

20 Nelly Hanna, *Thaqafat al-tabaqa al-wusta fi Misr al-'uthmaniya, al-qarn 16 ila-l-qarn 18*, translated by Ra'uf 'Abbas (Cairo: al-Dar al-Misriya al-Lubnaniya, 2003), 36–44 and 254. This is a translation of her *In Praise of Books: A Cultural History of Cairo's Middle Class, Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2004).

21 Magdi Guirguis, "The Organization of the Coptic Community in the Ottoman Period," in *Society and Economy in Egypt and the Eastern Mediterranean 1600–1900, Essays in Honor of André Raymond*, eds., Nelly Hanna and Raouf Abbas (Cairo and New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2005), 206.

22 Coptic Patriarchate Library, "Decrees of Patriarch Murkus VII" [1745–69], MS 134/323 Theology, fos. 218 verso and 219 recto.

23 "Decrees of Patriarch Murqus VII," fos. 207 verso–210 recto.

24 Cited by Jak Tajir (Jacques Tagher), *Aqbat wa muslimun mundh al-fath al-'arabi hatta 1922* (Cairo: Karrasat al-Tarikh al-Misri, 1951), 280. Published in French as Jacques Tagher, *Coptes et musulmans; preface de M. Gaston Wiet* (Cairo: Cahiers d'Histoire Egyptienne, 1952). De Maillet's memoirs of his time in Egypt were published as *Description de l'Egypte, contenant plusieurs remarques curieuses sur la geographie ancienne et moderne de ce pais, sur ses monuments anciens, sur les moeurs . . . composée sur les mémoires de m. de Maillet . . . par m. L'abbé Le Mascrier* (Paris: Chez L. Genneau et J. Rollin, fils, 1735).

25 Cited by Tagher, *Aqbat wa Muslimun*, 280. English translation: Charles Nicholas Sigisbert Sonnini [de Manoncour], *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt: Undertaken by Order of the Old Government of France*, translated from the French by Henry Hunter (London: printed for J. Debrett, 1800; republished Westmead, Farnborough: Gregg International, 1972), 631.

26 Cited by Tagher, *Aqbat wa muslimun*, 281; M. Niebuhr, *Travels through Arabia and Other Countries in the East Performed by M. Niebuhr*, translated by Robert Heron (Edinburgh: R. Morison & Son, 1792), 104 and 106.

27 Günsel Renda et al., *A History of Turkish Painting*, 2nd ed (Geneva: Palasar, 1988), 18.

28 Skálová and Gabra, *Icons of the Nile Valley*, 132.

29 Renda et al., *History of Turkish Painting*, 58.

30 Sawirus ibn al-Muqaffa', *Tartib al-kahanut* (Cairo: Nashrat al-Anba Samu'il, 1999), 22.

31 Yuhanna ibn Abi Zakariya in Siba', *al-Jawhara al-nafisa fi 'ulum al-kanisa*, edited and translated into Latin by al-Abb Fiktur Mansur Mustarih al-Fransiskani (V. Mistrih)/*Pretiosa Margarita de scientiis ecclesiasticis (Johannis Ibn Abî Zakarîâ ibn Sibâ), recognita in textu arabico, apparatu critico aucta ac in latinum idioma versa* (Cairo: Franciscan Center of Christian Oriental Studies, 1966), 164.

32 Johannes den Heijer, "Miraculous Icons and their Historical Background," in *Coptic Art and Culture*, ed. H. Hondelink (Cairo: The Netherlands Institute for Archaeology and Arabic Studies, 1990), 89–100.

33 "Shams al-Ri'asa Abu al-Barakat ibn Kibr, ch. 18: 'Fi-l sawm wa tartibu wa tartib ayyam al-baskha wa 'id al-qiyama,' *Misbah al-dhulma wa-idah al-khidma*," ed. Wadi' Abu al-Lif al-Fransiskani, *Studia Orientalia Christiana. Collectanea* 34 (2001): 257.

34 J. G. Davies, *Medieval Armenian Art and Architecture: The Church of the Holy Cross, Aght'mar*, with photographs by Anthony Kersting (London: Pindar Press, 1991), 20; Nira Stone, *The Kaffa Lives of the Desert Fathers: A Study in Armenian Manuscript Illumination* (Lovanii: In aedibus Peeters, 1997), 172, fo. 238.

35 Sirapie der Nerssian, *Armenian Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1978); idem, *The Armenians* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1969), 136–54.

36 André Raymond, "An Expanding Community: The Christians of Aleppo in the Ottoman Era (16th–18th centuries), in *Arab Cities in the Ottoman Period: Cairo, Syria and the Maghreb* (London: Ashgate, Variorum Reprints, 2002), 69; Thomas Philipp, *The Syrians in Egypt, 1725–1975* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1985), 59.

37 Jane Hathaway, *Siyasat al-zumar al-hakima fi Misr al-'uthmaniya*, translated by 'Abd al-Rahman al-Shaykh (Cairo: Supreme Council for Culture, 2003), 39.

38 'Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib al-athar* (Cairo: al-Anwar al-Muhammadiya, n.d.), vol. 1, 505; idem, *'Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti's History of Egypt, 'Aja'ib al-athar fi-l-tarajim wa-l-akhbar*, eds. Thomas Philipp and Moshe Perlmann (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1994), vol. 1, 644.

39 Something similar occurred within the Armenian community in Istanbul where the elite of the community used their status and influence to manage the affairs of the community. They also interfered in the matters of choosing and appointing patriarchs. See Avedis K. Sanjian, *The Armenian Communities in Syria under Ottoman Dominion* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965), 35.
40 Magdi Guirguis, "Athar al-arakhna ʻala awdaʻ al-qibt fi-l-qarn al-thamin ʻashr," *Annales Islamologiques* 34 (2000): 32.
41 Sanjian, *Armenian Communities in Syria*, 52.
42 Guirguis, "Organization," 211–12.
43 Some religious scholars continued to oppose the building and restoration of churches. The spirit of the time was against them, however, as the general mood was more tolerant and so they were unable to stop the movement for church building and restoration.
44 Coptic Patriarchate Archives, S10, dated 25 Ragab 1133/16 January 1700.
45 Coptic Patriarchate Archives, U7, dated 15 Shawwal 1193/26 October 1779. A more detailed discussion of this issue can be found in Guirguis, "Athar al-arakhna," 34.
46 Coptic Patriarchate Archives, M44, Diwan al-ʻAli Court, 30 Rabi II 1066/26 February 1656.
47 Salih Nakhla, *Silsilat tarikh al-babawat*, series 4, 136; Coptic Patriarchate Archives, G286, 14 Rajab 1116/12 November 1704.
48 Coptic Patriarchate Archives, D 397, al-Bab al-ʻAli Court (10 Rajab 1113/11 December 1701).
49 Salih Nakhla, *Silsilat tarikh al-babawat*, series 4, 137.
50 Coptic Patriarchate Archives, M 41, al-Saleh Court (1 Muharram 1131/24 November 1718).
51 Salih Nakhla, *Silsilat tarikh al-babawat*, series 5, 10.
52 Coptic Patriarchate Archives, S 21, al-Bab al-ʻAli Court (15 Rajab 1133/12 May 1721).
53 The details of the church's establishment and sanctification are included in manuscript 117 at the monastery's library. Muʻallim Yusuf al-Saruji's name and the dates of the restoration are recorded on the altar screen. The church was named after the Archangel Michael and John the Baptist.
54 Muʻallim Ibrahim Jawhari's name and the dates of the building of the church are recorded on the outer door.
55 Magdi Guirguis, "Mulahazat hawl kana'is wa adyurat al-Fayyum fi-l-ʻasrayn al-mamluki wa-l-ʻuthmani," forthcoming.
56 See Guirguis, "Athar al-arakhina," 27–29, for a list of lay scribes active in Upper Egypt.
57 Murqus Samika, *Dalil al-muthaf al-qibti wa aham al-kana'is wa-al-adyura al-athariya* (Cairo: al-Matbaʻa al-Amiriya,1930), vol. 1, p. 176.
58 Nubar Der Mikaelian, "al-Musawwir Yuhanna al-Qudsi fi Misr," 56. The Friends of Armenian Culture allowed me to make use of this manuscript.

59 Coptic Patriarchate Archives, Kana'is 6, Qisma 'Arabiya Court (8 Rajab 1162/24 June 1749).
60 Coptic Museum Library, MS 30 Liturgica, fo. 81a.
61 Coptic Patriarchate Archives, D 169, al-Bab al-'Ali Court (11 Safar 1232/31 December 1816).
62 Coptic Museum Library, MS 28/99 Biblica; Coptic Patriarchate Library, MS 204/50 Biblica.
63 Coptic Museum Library, MS 105/477 Historica.
64 His works include MS 70/118 Biblica at the Coptic Patriarchate Library (dated 1709).
65 Coptic Patriarchate Library, MS 184/110 Biblica (dated 1773).
66 Magdi Guirguis, "Ibrahim al-Nasikh et la culture copte au XVIIIème siècle," in *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of a New Millennium: Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Coptic Studies, Leiden, August 27–September 2, 2000*, ed. on behalf of the International Association for Coptic Studies (IACS) by Mat Immerzeel and Jacques van der Vliet, with the assistance of Maarten Kerston and Carolien van Zoest, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 133 (collection) (Leuven and Dudley, MA: Uitgeverij Peeters en Dep. Oosterse Studies, 2004), 939–52.
67 Sanjian, *Armenian Communities in Syria*, 158.
68 Sawirus ibn al-Muqaffa', *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria, known as The History of The Holy Church by Sawirus ibn al-Muqaffa'*, translated and annotated by Aziz Suryal Atiya, Yassa Abd Al-Masih, and O.H.E. Khs-Burmester (Cairo: La société d'Archéologie Copte, 1959) vol. 2, part 3, 219–20.
69 Hugh G. Evelyn-White, *The Monasteries of the Wadi 'n Natrûn* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, Egyptian Expedition, 1926–[33]), vol. 3, 94.
70 Karel C. Innemée, "The Wall-paintings of Deir al-Surian: New Discoveries of 1999," 4.
71 Angèle Kapoïan-Koumjian, *L'Egypte vue par des Armèniens* (Paris: Editions de la Foundation Singer-Polignac, 1988), 1–2.
72 Tarikh Abu al-Makarim (Tarikh Abu Salih al-Armani), vol. 2 (Cairo, 2000), fo. 83a, 110–11.
73 *Al-Siniksar al-Qibti*, ed. Rene Baset, vol. 3, re-ed. Anba Samuel (Cairo, 1999), 256–57.
74 Coptic Patriarchate Library, MS 48 Historica fo. 182 recto–189a.
75 Skálová and Gabra, *Icons of the Nile Valley*, 120–21.
76 Guirguis, "Athar al-Arakhina," 24.
77 In 1058, the Armenian patriarchate was transferred from Echmiadzin to Cilicia. Although the see at Echmiadzin was restored in 1441, the Cilician patriarch continues in office until the present day, although the see is now located at Antelias in Lebanon. Cilicia was the site of an independent Armenian state from 1080 to 1375.
78 Pars Tulacı, *Armenian Churches of Istanbul* (Istanbul: Pars Yayın Ltd., 1991), 45–46.

79 Coptic Patriarchate Archives, K 87 (2 Dhu-l Qa'ida 916/31 January 1511). The descendants of this marriage, Copts themselves, probably redirected the proceeds of the *waqf* to benefit their own community.
80 Coptic Patriarchate Archives, Z 921, al-Bab al-'Ali Court (22 Muharram 971/11 September 1563).
81 Coptic Patriarchate Archives, B 392, al-Salihiya al-Najmiya Court (12 Sha'ban 1099/12 June 1688).
82 Al-Zahid Court sijjil 691, case 31, p. 17 (7 Jumada I 1142/28 November 1729).
83 Al-Zahid Court sijjil 695, case 29, p. 12 (17 Dhu-l Hijja 1155/12 February 1743).
84 Qisma 'Arabiya Court sijjil 112, case 298, p. 152 (4 Shawwal 1169/2 July 1756).
85 Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris, MS 227 Arabe.
86 Coptic Patriarchate Archives, B 392, al-Salihiya al-Najmiya Court (12 Sha'ban 1099/12 June 1688).
87 Raymond, *al-Hirafiyun*, vol. 2, 728.
88 Anthoine Morison, *Voyage en Egypte d'Anthoine Morison 169*7, ed. George Goyan (Cairo: IFAO, 1976), 160.
89 George Sandys, *Voyages en Egypte : des années 1611 et 1612*, translated by Oleg V. Volkoff (Cairo: IFAO, 1973), 95.
90 Tulacı, *Armenian Churches*, 97.
91 For more details about the Armenian communities in Syria, see Sanjian, *Armenian Communities in Syria*.
92 Raymond, *al-Hirafiyun*, vol. 2, 729.
93 Sanjian, *Armenian Communities in Syria*, 35–37.
94 Muhammad 'Afifi, *al-Aqbat fi-l 'asr al-'uthmani*, Tarikh al-Misriyin series (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-'Amma li-l-Kitab, 1992), 286.
95 Al-Bab al-'Ali Court sijjil 299, case 228, p. 152 (5 Muharram 1196/17 December 1781).
96 Al-Maqrizi, *al-Khitat* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Adaab, n.d.), vol. 4, 376.
97 Cited by André Raymond, *al-Hirafiyun*, vol. 2, 730.
98 Coptic Patriarchate Library, MS 458/270 Theologica, 34 verso, 35 recto.
99 For funerary expenses deducted from Coptic legacies see Magdi Guirguis, "The Financial Resources of Coptic Priests in Nineteenth-century Egypt," in *Money, Land and Trade: An Economic History of the Muslim Mediterranean*, ed. Nelly Hanna (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002), 223–43.
100 Qisma 'Arabiya Court sijjil 113, case 275, p. 157 (14 Shawwal 1170/2 July 1757).
101 Qisma 'Arabiya Court sijjil 127, case 208, p. 172 (30 Ramadan 1200/27 July 1786).
102 *Bibliotheque Nationale*, Paris, MS 227 Arabe
103 Al-Bab al-'Ali Court sijjil 307, case 241, p. 109 (11 Rabi I 1204/29 November 1789).

104 Nubar Der Mikaelian, “al-Musawwir Yuhanna al-Qudsi fi Misr,” 48–49.
105 Qisma ‘Arabiya Court, sijjil 122, case 918, p. 398 (30 Jumada al-Ula 1184/21 September 1770).
106 Qisma ‘Arabiya Court, sijjil 127, case 208, p. 172 (30 Ramadan 1200/27 July 1786).
107 Al-Salihiya al-Najmiya Court, sijjil 534, case 688 (2 Shawwal 1205/4 June 1791).
108 Al-Bab al-‘Ali Court, sijjil 289, case 117, 75–76 (1 Muharram 1191/9 February 1777).
109 Al-Salihiya al-Najmiya Court, sijjil 534, case 690 (2 Shawwal 1205/4 June 1791)
110 His name appears in court registers followed by the epithet ‘al-Naqqash.’ For example: Qisma ‘Arabiya, sijjil 126, case 44, p. 30 (3 Muharram 1192/1 February 1778).
111 Al-Salihiya al-Najmiya Court, sijjil 529, case 93, p. 115 (26 Dhu-l Qa‘ida 1190/6 January 1777).
112 Yusuf Karkur’s maternal grandfather was a tailor at Khatt Khan al-Khalili. He had a *makan* endowed into a *waqf* on 12 Sha‘ban 1099/27 August 1681 (Coptic Patriarchate Archives B 392, al-Salihiya al-Najmiya Court).
113 Qisma ‘Arabiya Court, sijjil 122, case 946, p. 413 (Dhu-l Hijja 1183/March–April 1770).
114 *The Martyrdom of St. Mar Guirguis (St. George)*, Hanging Church of the Virgin, Old Cairo.
115 Coptic Patriarchate Archives, Z 111, al-Salihiya (15 Muharram 1193/2 February 1779); B 463, Qisma ‘Arabiya Court (26 Dhu-l Hija 1199/30 October 1785).
116 Coptic Patriarchate Archives, B 376, al-Bab al- ‘Ali Court (14 Dhu-l Hijja 1192/3 January 1779).
117 *The Martyrdom of St. Mar Guirguis*, Hanging Church of the Virgin, Old Cairo.
118 Qisma ‘Arabiya Court, sijjil 127, case 208, p. 172 (30 Ramadan 1200/27 July 1786).
119 al-Salihiya al-Najmiya Court, sijjil 529, case 93, p. 115 (26 Dhu-l Qa‘ida 1190/6 January 1777).
120 Qisma ‘Arabiya Court, sijjil 129, case 350, pp. 249–50 (12 Dhu-l Qa‘ida 1208/11 July 1794).
121 Qisma ‘Arabiya Court, sijjil 111, case 399, p. 216 (14 Rabi‘ al-Awwal 1166/19 January 1753).
122 Al-Bab al-‘Ali Court, sijjil 289, case 117, pp. 75–76 (1 Muharram 1191/9 February 1777).
123 Coptic Patriarchate Archives, B 50; al-Bab al-‘Ali Court (14 Jumada al-Akhira 1180/17 November 1766); Qisma ‘Arabiya Court, sijjil 122, case 948, p. 416 (16 Jumada al-Akhira 1184/7 October 1770); Qisma ‘Arabiya Court, sijjil 126, case 440, p. 30 (3 Muharram 1192/1 February 1778).

124 Qisma ‘Arabiya Court, sijjil 126, case 44, p. 30 (3 Muharram 1192/1 February 1778).

125 Scholars who have studied Yuhanna’s art have not mentioned this particular work.

126 DWQ (Dar al-Watha’iq al-Qawmiya—Egyptian National Archives), *dasht* 143, p. 323 (11 Dhu-l Qa‘ida 1034/15 August 1625).

127 Qisma ‘Arabiya Court, sijjil 112, case 534, p. 269 (20 Dhu-l Hijja 1169/15 September 1756); al-Salih sijjil 358, case 429, p. 314 (25 Shawwal 1174/30 May 1761).

128 Misr al-Qadima Court, sijjil 98, case 2276, p. 594 (8 Shawwal 1021/2 December 1612).

129 Qisma ‘Arabiya Court, sijjil 124, case 453, p. 271 (26 Shawwal 1187/10 January 1774).

130 Some of the Copts mentioned in the court records are: *al-dhimmi* Bishara al-Naqqash son of *al-dhimmi* Nisim; *al-dhimmi* ‘Abdu son of *al-dhimmi* Mina al-Naqqash; *al-dhimmi* Milika son of *al-dhimmi* Abali al-Naqqash al-Nusrani al-Ya‘qubi; *al-dhimmi* Nakhla al-Naqqash son of *al-dhimmi* Shibli al-Nusrani al-Ya‘qubi; and *al-dhimmi* Salih son of *al-dhimmi* Guirguis al-Naqqash al-Nusrani al-Ya‘qubi. Some were of Syrian origin such as *al-dhimmi* Mikha’il son of *al-dhimmi* Ibrahim al-Naqqash al-Nusrani al-Shami (that is, from al-Sham, Damascus). ‘Arabiya Court, sijjil 117, case 489, p. 272 (23 Dhu-l Hijja 1174/26 July 1761); Qisma ‘Arabiya Court, sijjil 124, case 399, p. 240 (1 Sha‘ban 1187/18 October 1773); Qisma ‘Arabiya Court, sijjil 126, case 245, p. 153 (30 Safar 1193/19 March 1779); Qisma ‘Arabiya Court, sijjil 126, case 278, p. 173 (1 Rabi‘ al-Akhar 1193/18 April 1779); Qisma ‘Arabiya Court, sijjil 126, case 450, p. 298 (15 Shawwal 1193/26 October 1779); Qisma ‘Arabiya Court, sijjil 126, case 401, p. 256 (23 Ramadan 1193/4 October 1779).

131 Qisma ‘Arabiya Court, sijjil 126, case 644, p. 421 (5 Ramadan 1193/16 September 1779).

132 For example, sources refer to the Coptic *rassam* in al-Mahalla al-Kubra, the *dhimmi* Atnayus son of al-Mu‘allim ‘Abduh al-Nusrani al-Ya‘qubi, who was known as *al-Rassam*, and the Armenian Ya‘qub *al-Rassam* son of the *dhimmi* Jarabij al-Armani. Muslim workers also carried the title *al-Rassam*: for example, al-Hajj ‘Abd al-Karim *al-Rassam* of Khatt al-Barudiya, son of al-Shaykh Muhammad al-Dasnuni; al-Shihabi Ahmad, son of the deceased al-Shaykh Ramadan *al-Rassam*; *al-usta* ‘Abd al-Baqi son of the deceased al-Shaykh Ramadan *al-Rassam;* al-Sayyid al-Sharif Taj son of al-Sayyid al-Sharif Muhammad *al-Rassam* of Khatt Harat ‘Abidin; and al-Sayyid Taj son of the deceased al-Sayyid al-Sharif Ahmad *al-Rassam*. Al-Mahalla Court, sijjil 4, case 388, p. 236 (7 Safar 1121/18 April 1709). Qisma ‘Arabiya Court, sijjil 122, case 934, p. 406 (16 Jumada al-Akhira 1184/7 October 1770). *Al-Salih*, sijjil 350, case 498, p. 281 (15 Rabi‘ al-Awwal 1153/10 June 1740). Al-Birmishiya Court, sijjil 715, case 278, p. 141 (30 Shawwal 1098/8 September 1687); DWQ, *dasht* 223, p. 24 (26 Safar 1121/7 May 1709); Al-Birmishiya

Court, sijjil 617, case 1205, p. 478 (15 Muharram 1025/3 February 1616); DWQ, dasht 223, p. 24 (26 Safar 1121/7 May 1709). Al-Birmishiya Court, sijjil 617, case 1205, p. 478 (15 Muharram 1025/3 February 1616). Sijillat Taqarir al-Nazar, sijjil 1, case 932, p. 99 (21 Shawwal 1139/11 June 1727). The toponymy of Cairo itself carries several references to the craft of *rasm*. Thus, we find the Rab' al-Rassamin in Cairo, the Darb al-Rassam at Qantarat al-Muski (the neighborhood where Yuhanna al-Armani lived), and 'Atfat al-Rassamin in Khan al-Burtuqaliya. Al-Bab al-'Ali Court, sijjil 249, case 283, p. 191 (1169/1755–56); DWQ, *dasht* 131, p. 124, document 3 (1020/1611–12); Qisma 'Arabiya Court, sijjil 19, case 619, p. 438 (30 Rabi al-Akhar 1020/12 July 1611). Similarly, the Mamluk historian al-Maqrizi mentioned special shops for the *rassamun* as among the places burnt down in a fire in Khatt al-Bunduqaniyin in 751/1350 (al-Maqrizi, *al-Khitat*, p. 667).

133 Murtada al-Zabidi, *Taj al-'arus*, 2843.

134 Qisma 'Arabiya Court, sijjil 111, case 830, pp. 378–88 (20 Rajab 1167/13 May 1754).

135 For example in Tarikh Abu al-Makarim, *Tarikh al-kana'is wa-l-adiyra fi-l-qarn al-thani 'ashr bi-l Wajh al-Bahri*, ed. Anba Samu'il (Cairo, 1999), vol. 1, 1 and 5.

136 Coptic Museum Library, MS 30 Biblica, fo. 81a; Coptic Patriarchate Archives, D169; al-Bab al-'Ali Court (11 Safar 1232/31 December 1816).

137 Contrary to the common misconception that Muslim societies did not practice painting and drawing because of shari'a restrictions, there was a special guild for painters in Ottoman Cairo. The historiographical problem lies in trying to understand Muslim societies through established legal concepts without trying to understand how these concepts were in fact practiced in historical societies. Historians are aware of a long list of practices that were forbidden by sharia law but were practiced continuously in Muslim societies.

138 Evliya Çelebi, *Siyahitname Misr*, translated by Muhammad 'Ali 'Awni (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub wa-l-Watha'iq al-Qawmiya, 2003), 476.

139 Çelebi, *Siyahitname Misr*, 459.

140 On craft guilds in Egypt and the various regulations and rituals of joining the guilds, see Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants.*

141 Coptic Patriarchate Archives, A1324, Zahid Court (24 Jumada al-Akhar 1180/27 November 1766).

142 Qisma 'Arabiya Court, sijjil 126, case 44, p. 30 (3 Muharram 1192/1 February 1778).

143 Coptic Patriarchate Archives, B52, Qisma 'Arabiya Court (16 Dhu-l Hijja 1180/24 July 1766).

144 Qisma 'Arabiya Court, sijjil 122, case 847, case 848, p. 414–15 (16 Jumada al-Akhira 1184/11 June 1770); Qisma 'Arabiya Court, sijjil 123, case 66, p. 44 (18 Shawwal 1184/4 February 1771).

145 Qisma 'Arabiya Court, sijjil 123, case 126, case 127, pp. 71–72 (1 Dhu-l Hijja 1184/18 March 1771).

146 Qisma 'Arabiya Court, sijjil 127, case 195 (6 Jumada al-Ula 1200/7 March 1786).

147 Qisma ‘Arabiya Court, sijjil 122, case 946, p. 413 (16 Jumada al-Akhira 1184/7 October 1770).
148 Coptic Patriarchate Archives, B 376; al-Bab al-‘Ali Court (14 Dhu-l Hijja 1192/3 January 1779).
149 Coptic Patriarchate Archives, Z 111, al-Salihiya al-Najmiya Court (15 Muharram 1193/2 February 1779).
150 On the icon of St. Mari Bihnam at the church of Mar Mina in Famm al-Khalij, dated 1782.
151 Al-Bab al-‘Ali Court, sijjil 289, case 117, pp. 75–76 (1 Muharram 1191/9 February 1777).
152 Al-Salihiya al-Najmiya Court, sijjil 529, case 93, p. 115 (26 Dhu-l Qa’ida 1190/6 January 1777).
153 Coptic Patriarchate Archives, G 417, al-Bab al-‘Ali Court (11 Safar 1183/20 January 1750).
154 Coptic Patriarchate Archives, D 461, Qisma ‘Arabiya Court (27 Rabi al-Akhar 1163/5 April 1750). Another famous bureaucrat was referred to as "*al-dhimmi* Antony, son of *al-dhimmi* Yusuf al-Nusrani al-Ya‘qubi, known as al-Qudsi," which indicates that he was an Egyptian Copt but was known in his community as al-Qudsi. In other documents the same person is referred to as *al-dhimmi* Antony, son of *al-dhimmi* Yusuf al-Qudsi, which suggests that he was in fact *from* Jerusalem. In a third document, his sister is referred to as Sariya, daughter of *al-dhimmi* Yusuf al-Nusrani al-Qudsi. Coptic Patriarchate Archives, Z 844, al-Bab al-‘Ali Court (22 Sha‘ban 1182/1 January 1769*);* Coptic Patriarchate Archives, A 224, al-Zahid Court (17 Shawwal 1180/18 March 1767); Coptic Patriarchate Archives, G 285, Qisma ‘Arabiya Court (5 Dhu-l Hijja 1169/31 August 1756).
155 Coptic Patriarchate Archives, B 50, al-Bab al-‘Ali Court (24 Jumada al-Akhira 1180/27 November 1766).
156 Coptic Patriarchate Archives, D 226, Qisma ‘Arabiya Court (17 Sha‘ban 1199/25 June 1785).
157 Coptic Patriarchate Archives, D 193, al-Zahid Court (10 Jumada al-Akhira 1153/1 September 1740).
158 Coptic Patriarchate Archives, D 68, Babay Sa‘ada wa-l-Kharq Court (15 Sha‘ban 1166/17 June 1753).
159 Library of the Monastery of Anba Bula at the Red Sea, MS 117 Historica.
160 Coptic Patriarchate Archives, D 336, al-Salihiya al-Najmiya Court (20 Shawwal 1153/8 January 1741).
161 Ibrahim al-Nasikh made a note to that effect in a manuscript he copied in 1765 (Library of the Church of Abu Sayfayn, MS 19 Lutirgica, fo. 172 recto).
162 Al-Salih Court, sijjil 263, case 171, p. 67; case 182, p. 74 (Muharram 1188/ March 1774); sijjil 264, case 297, pp. 118–19 (18 Jumada al-Akhira 1190/4 August 1776).
163 Al-Salih Court, sijjil 358, case 198, p. 156 (1 Muharram 1174/13 August 1760).

164 Coptic Patriarchate Library, Bishara Yuhanna MS 79/124 Biblica. The manuscript begins with an icon of St. John.
165 Nubar Der Mikaelian, "al-Musawwir Yuhanna al-Qudsi fi Misr."
166 Shuruq Muhammad 'Ashur, "Ayqunat kanisat Abi Sayfayn al-mu'arrakha fi-l-qarn al-thamin 'ashar," unpublished MA thesis, Faculty of Archaeology, Cairo University, 1999.
167 Library of Abu Sayfayn church, MS 19 Lutirgica, fo. 126 verso (24 Tuba 1481/8 Sha'ban 1178/31 January 1765).
168 For example, in 1767, Ibrahim added missing folios in his writing to an old manuscript of *al-Basha'ir al-Sab'*, dated 1226 (Coptic Museum Library, MS 95/3 Biblica). He states that this was commissioned by Barsum, the priest of the Abu Sayfayn church.
169 'Ashur, "Ayqunat," vol. 2, 454ff.
170 Qisma 'Arabiya Court, sijjil 117, case 304, p. 174 (15 Ramadan 1174/20 April 1761); sijjil 126, case 471, p. 309 (20 Dhu-l Hijja 1192/9 September 1779).
171 Magdi Guirguis, "Ibrahim al-Nasikh et la culture copte au XVIIIème siècle," in *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of a New Millennium*, 951.
172 Scholars at the American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE) have been working on a catalogue of Coptic icons for some time but none of their work has been published yet.
173 Nubar Der Mikaelian, "al-Musawwir Yuhanna al-Qudsi fi Misr."
174 The *nazir al-kanisa* (pl. *nuzzar*) was the official in charge of overseeing the administrative and financial affairs of a church.
175 Ibrahim Jawhari is one of the most significant personalities in Coptic history. All Coptic sources include biographies of the man who is revered by the Church. The two main sources for his biography are an obituary by 'Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti, the eminent historian of the Ottoman period, and another by one of the most famous Coptic bishops of the nineteenth century: Anba Yusab the bishop of Jirja and Akhmim (d.1826). Yusab described him as "a great archon, a pious man, a saint." Ibrahim Jawhari's biography/hagiography was included in the Coptic *Synaxarium*, the Coptic Church's book of saints and martyrs. Coptic sources often refer to him as *Sultan al-Qibt*, or the Sultan of the Copts. Ibrahim Jawhari was keen to leave gifts to most churches and monasteries, which added to his fame compared to other Coptic notables. In many ways he is the archetype of the Coptic notable who rose to prominence and gained considerable wealth and power during the late Ottoman period.
176 Coptic Patriarchate Archives, N 508, al-Bab al-'Ali Court (14 Shawwal 1186/8 January 1773).
177 While the dates of Ibrahim Jawhari's tenure as *nazir* of the monastery of Mar Mina are not established he is referred to in this capacity in various documents on the following dates: Coptic Patriarchate Archives, A 865 (5 Jumada I 1190/25 February 1776); Coptic Patriarchate Archives, N 2, al-Bab al-'Ali Court (16 Jumada II 1194/19 June 1780); Coptic Patriarchate Archives, Z 142, al-Bab al-'Ali Court (15 Dhu-l Hijja 1195/2 December 1781); Coptic

Patriarchate Archives, Z 766, al-Bab al-‘Ali Court (1 Jumada I 1197/4 April 1783).

178 Coptic Museum Library, MS 28/99 Biblica; Coptic Patriarchate Library, MS 204/50 Biblica.

179 Coptic Museum Library, MS 105/477 Historica.

180 Coptic Patriarchate Archives, A 2033, A 587, A 221, al-Bab al-‘Ali Court (1 Shawwal 1160/6 October 1747); al-Bab al-‘Ali Court (23 Jumada II 1178/18 December 1764); al-Bab al-‘Ali Court (14 Jumada I 1179/29 October 1765); al-Bab al-‘Ali Court (25 Shawwal 1179/6 April 1766).

181 Coptic Patriarchate Archives, N 513, Qanatir al-Siba’ Court (8 Dhu-l Qa’ida 1183/5 March 1770).

182 Skálová and Gabra, *Icons of the Nile Valley*, 138.

183 Coptic Patriarchate Archives, A2970, al-Bab al-‘Ali Court (12 Shawwal 1150/2 February 1738).

184 Coptic Patriarchate Archives, S16, al-Salihiya al-Najmiya Court (15 Sha‘ban 1165/28 June 1752).

185 Coptic Patriarchate Archives, N671, Qanatir al-Siba’ Court (28 Safar 1205/6 November 1790).

186 Coptic Patriarchate Archives, M4, al-Salih Court (13 Ramadan 1191/15 October 1777).

187 A famous and wealthy Copt who witnessed the French Expedition to Egypt and was killed after the French evacuation in 1802. Tawfik Iskarus, *Nawabigh al-Aqbat wa-mashahiruhum fi-l-qarn al-tasi‘ ‘ashar* (Cairo: Matba‘at al-Tawfiq, 1910–13), vol. 2, 345.

188 Coptic Patriarchate Archives, N 279, al-Bab al-‘Ali Court (16 Jumada I 1146 and marginalia 18 Jumada II 1192/25 October 1733 and 14 July 1778).

189 Based on Nubar Der Mikaelian’s study, “al-Musawwir Yuhanna al-Qudsi fi Misr.”

190 Qisma ‘Arabiya Court, sijjil 127, case 208, p. 172 (30 Ramadan 1200/27 July 1786).

191 Al-Salih Court, 263, 171, p. 67; 263, 182, p. 74 (Muharram 1188/March 1774); 264, 297, pp. 118–99 (18 Jumada II 1190/4 August 1776).

192 Nubar Der Mikaelian, “al-Musawwir Yuhanna al-Qudsi fi Misr,” 56.

193 Murqus Simaykah, *Dalil al-mathaf al-qibti wa aham al-kana’is wa-l-adyura al-athariya* (Cairo: al-Matba‘a al-Amiriya, 1930), vol. 1, 176.

194 For example: an icon at the Abu Sayfayn church depicts John the Baptist with two left feet. Shuruq Muhammad ‘Ashur, “Ayqunat,” vol. 2, 454ff.

195 There are multiple references to Guirguis in the archives, for example, Qisma ‘Arabiya Court sijjil 126, case 44, p. 30 (3 Muharram 1192/1 February 1778).

196 This Guirguis also appears repeatedly in the archives, for example Coptic Patriarchate Archives, B 376, al-Bab al-‘Ali Court (14 Dhu-l Hijja 1192/3 January 1779).

197 Qisma ‘Arabiya Court, sijjil 122, case 946, p. 413 (Dhu-l Hijja 1183/March–April 1770).

198 Qisma ‘Arabiya Court, sijjil 117, case 304, p. 174 (15 Ramadan 1174/20 April 1761); Qisma ‘Arabiya Court, sijjil 126, case 471, p. 309 (20 Dhu-l Hijja 1192/9 January 1779).

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204 Husband of Sima, daughter of Salib Khashtadur al-Qudsi, Yuhanna’s niece.

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